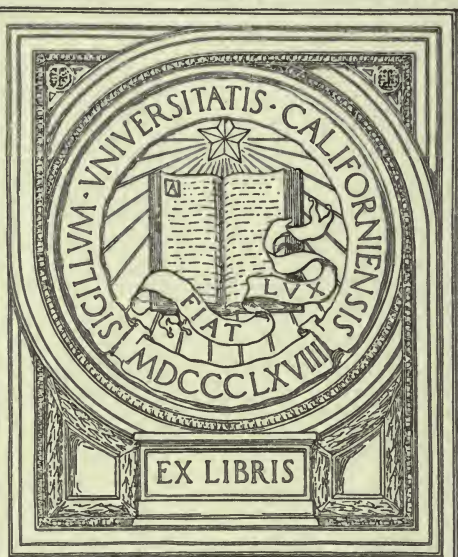
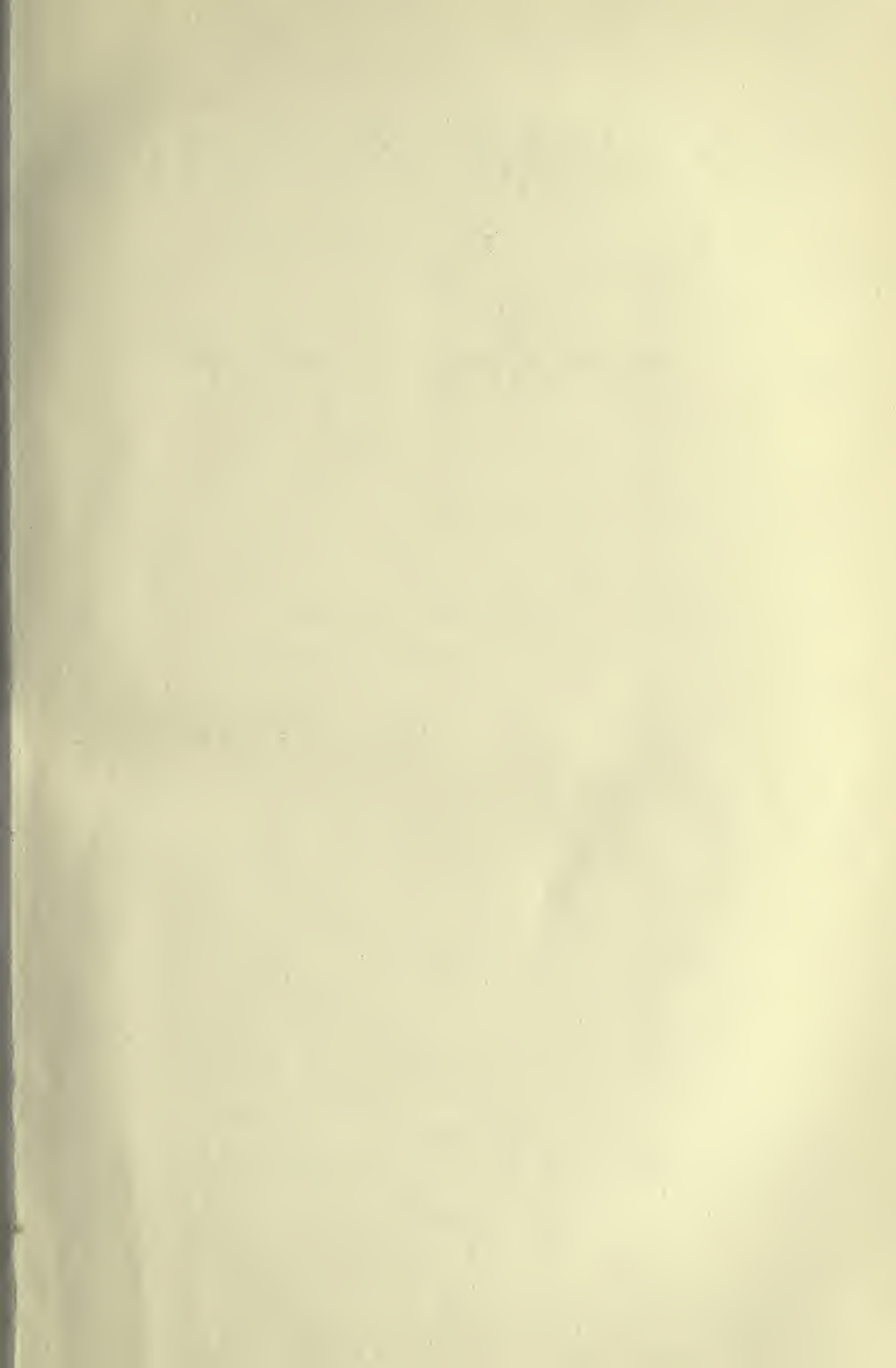
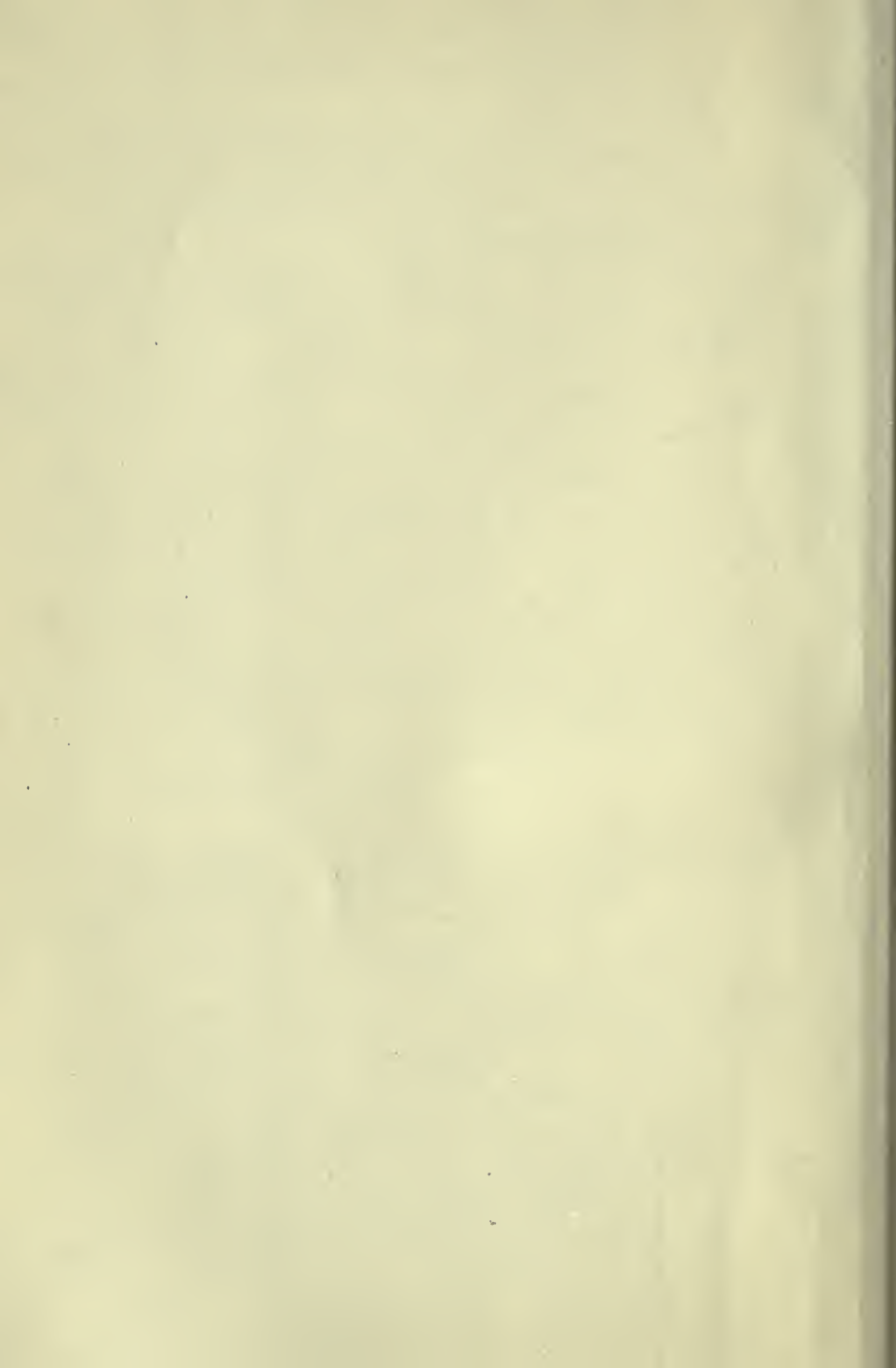


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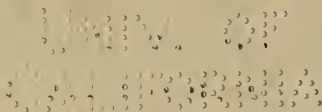
AND

How, When, and Where to Seek It.

BY

EDWARD B. BAKER,

LATE DEPUTY INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF POLICE, BENGAL.



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TO THE
LIBRARY OF

TO
YOUNG SPORTSMEN IN GENERAL,
AND TO
MY SONS IN PARTICULAR,

This Little Book is Dedicated,

IN THE HOPE THAT A PLAIN, UNVARNISHED RECORD
OF FORTY YEARS' LIFE AND EXPERIENCES
AMONG SAVAGE BEASTS AND MORE SAVAGE MEN,
MAY PROVE USEFUL AND INSTRUCTIVE.

E. B. BAKER.

DURUKA, SANTHAL PERGUNNAHS,
1886.

M216789

P R E F A C E.

MY only apology for venturing to write this little book is the encouragement thereto in the many references made to me from time to time by young sportsmen and new comers as to the sport to be obtained, the game birds and beasts to be met with, and lastly, the best seasons and localities to seek them in the Lower Provinces.

Drawing then upon the experiences of forty years of an active life, during which I have hunted or shot over every district, spending no small portion of it too in the wild woods or broad savannahs of the frontiers, as well as in the open plains and jungles of the interior, I have put together some notes bearing on these subjects, in the belief that they will prove useful and entertaining to some readers.

I do not pretend to write a book of Natural History, every properly constituted little British boy knowing more of it than his grandsires did in their old age; nor do I presume to offer my poor experiences for the edification of "old Shikarees," whose knowledge is far greater than I can pretend to; but an attempt is here made to lay before the young sportsman a few hints for his guidance.

Every incident is related exactly as it occurred; and whenever I have not myself been an actor or a witness, I

have recounted the adventure on the written statements of friends whose words may be implicitly relied on; but to the experienced in such matters nothing in these pages will appear strange or extraordinary.

The above is my excuse for writing this book; and now, having given "mine enemy" (if I have one) a fair opening, let him fire away.

E. B. B.

DURUKA, SANTHAL PERGUNNAHS,
1886.

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SPORT IN BENGAL.

CHAPTER I.

Physical and Climatic Features of the Country.

It is the common belief, out of the country itself, that Bengal is a vast alluvial plain—a dead level, hardly broken by palms, low trees, rank bushes, and giant grasses, in traversing which the traveller's eye meets only with rice fields and swamps successively, in unending monotony; a region inhabited by savage tigers, panthers, buffaloes, wild hog, serpents and baboons, as fully as by intelligent baboons and polite "coolies." A "griffin," asked what he expected to find, replied that, out of towns, he had looked for immense flat plains, dotted over with palms, in the shade of which tigers might be seen reclining in the noon-day heat, while snakes encircled the trunks, and natives drank the milk of the fruit among the topmost leaves. This poetical picture is not, however, the correct one, since the territories officially known as the Lower Provinces, can boast of as great a variety of scenery as most countries of the globe.

The immense and populous country called Bengal, consists, in fact, of four distinct provinces, differing much in soil, climate, natural features, and the character of the inhabitants, these four being, Bengal proper, Behar, Orissa, and Chota, or Chutia Nagpoor, while a fifth, Assam, has been recently placed under a separate civil administration.

At a rough calculation, the first of the four, that is, Bengal proper, may be about equal in area and population to the other three, the aggregates being about 152,000 square miles, supporting 66,000,000 of inhabitants. Not only does the country present physical features in great variety, from snow-clad mountains down to ant hills, and from some of the mightiest rivers in the world to frog-stocked puddles, but the races which inhabit it are many in number, and dissimilar in origin, habits, and language. The stalwart Rajpoot of Shahabad in no way resembles his co-religionist, the Ooriya; the Santhal and the Mahomedan of Eastern Bengal have nothing in common; and, lastly, the ordinary Bengalee of Calcutta and its neighbourhood is as little like the Moonda and the Cheeroo as a Portuguese is like a Hungarian. So slight is the sympathy between the mountaineers and the plains-men, that the keen relish of a gourmand over a dish of "natives" does not exceed that of a Naga, or Kookee, operating on a fat Bengalee trader with his "das," or long knife.

As the country is divided into four distinct provinces, so it presents four distinct physical aspects. Firstly, vast level plains of alluvial lands, highly cultivated, thickly peopled, and almost entirely denuded of forests and jungles, as the central districts of Bengal and the greater portion of Behar. Secondly, elevated laterite tracts, covered to a considerable extent with "sal" woods, as Chota Nagpoor, and some western districts of Bengal. Thirdly, mountains and hills richly clothed with forests, as the Darjeeling and Chittagong districts, and parts of Orissa and the tributary mehals; and, lastly, wide savannahs and wildernesses of thickly-growing woods, as the "Terai" and the "Soonderbuns."

Bengal proper may be briefly described as lying between the Himalayas on the north and the sea on the south, bounded east and west by the Tipperah and Chittagong hills and the highlands of Santhalia and Chota Nagpoor respectively. It is a low flat alluvial, highly cultivated, and abounding in rivers and marshes, supporting a dense and rapidly-increasing population, of which no more need be remarked than that it does

not furnish a single soldier to the armies of the State, and is fonder of chattering and splitting legal straws than of action and physical exertions.

The province of Behar, lying on both banks of the Ganges, from near Benares down to Peerpointee, resembles Bengal in so far as it too is highly cultivated and thickly peopled. Possessing a drier and more salubrious climate, its inhabitants are sturdier and more manly than those of Bengal, but still inferior to those of the Upper and Central Provinces. Except in Purneah and some parts of Shahabad, Gaya, and Monghyr, Behar is bare of extensive jungles, and as a field for the sportsman takes a low place.

Chutia, or Chota Nagpoor, comes next—a high and healthy plateau—the home of the Kol, the Moondah, the Kherwar, the Bhogtah, and other non-Aryan tribes. Rising step by step from the banks of the Damooda, the revered of the Santhals, and its affluent the Barrakur, these highlands attain an altitude of over two thousand feet at Hazaribagh and Ranchi, and further west form still loftier plateaus in Sirgooja. Forests of “sal” and other trees clothe the hills and the banks of rivers which spring from their sides, and at first flow in small streamlets among rocks and stones, till, breaking through the highlands and woods of Nagpoor, they burst in broad and shallow courses into the sea, through the lowlands of Orissa.

The soil of this province is in general sterile, and its surface is much seamed and scarred with deep ravines. Numerous hills rise abruptly—some mere heaps of rocks, others lofty and grand, such as Pareesnath—well-wooded to their summits. A noticeable feature of this country is the occurrence upon its face, at considerable distances apart, of hills of considerable altitude, which stand like sentries on guard; these are, commencing with the lowest and most eastward, Soosoonia, Beharinath, Pachart, Dalma, and, lord of all, Pareesnath, whose storm-riven peak attains a height of over four thousand feet.

Fourthly and last, there is Orissa, a narrow strip of fertile land, lying between the sea and the timber-clothed hills of

the tributary mehals; a country of many rivers, shallow in the dry season, but both broad and deep in the monsoon months, when they are not always an unmixed blessing, threatening, as they often do, to sweep into the ocean the hopes of the husbandman, whose fields they irrigate and make fruitful in their milder moods.

Thus, then, it will be understood that in the Lower Provinces, ruled by the Proconsul of Belvedere for H.M. the Queen-Empress, there are mountains, hills and highlands, as well as flat grain-producing plains, green savannahs, and extensive morasses; fussy streamlets leaping and dancing over boulders and pebbly beds, as well as broad rivers sweeping majestically to the sea, to cast into it the spoils torn from mountain sides more than a thousand miles away; and thus the soil, on which grew the deodar and the pine in the pure mountain air, forms islets nourishing rushes and tamarisk in the heat and reek amid the brackish waters of the mouths of the Ganges and Megna.

It is most interesting to watch the birth and growth of such islets, where the great rivers pour their muddy waters into the bay. First may be observed the low bank, half sand, half mud, which, barely topping high water mark, offers a soft couch to the basking crocodile, and a hunting-field to the curlew and sandpiper; next the rush-clothed islet submerged only at the highest spring tides, the mid-day resort of the bar-headed goose and the tern; then the island, a few inches higher, tricked out with grass and tamarisk, giving shelter to the wild buffalo, wild hog, and hog-deer. A year passes, and patches of cultivation appear, and the fruits of the husbandman's toil is halved with him by the wild beasts, on whom, again, the sportsman takes toll with spear and rifle; another year or two may pass, and the entire surface is yellow with ripe grain, rejoicing the heart of the sower, who now reaps, with little toil and solicitude, fat harvests, unshared with savage creatures; and then "all," as Mrs. Nickleby's neighbour remarked, "is gas and gaiters"—for a time; for a wrecked boat, a snag or an eddy may change the course of the mighty stream which gave

it birth, and the little island, torn away rapidly by the chafing waters, is known no more, except in memory and on old maps. Haply the earth, which supported thousands of creatures, re-appears still further out at sea, to become its waste-paper basket or lumber-room, on which to cast her discarded playthings—mutilated trunks of great trees, remains of wrecked boats, or the ribs and masts of ships destroyed in its fury far away; and so, again, the land may rise by degrees once more, and acquire, perhaps, a permanent name and position.

In the map attached to this little work, the difference in the leading features of the country has been shown by colours. Thus, that portion tinted yellow is Bengal proper, Behar, and the greater part of Orissa, highly cultivated, thickly populated, and scantily provided with heavy grass or tree coverts, consequently containing little to invite the sportsman in search of big game, wild hog and panthers excepted, if they may be classified as such, these being found almost everywhere. The tracts tinted red are laterite, or high-lying lands, the most remarkable vegetation of which is the “sal” forest, the home in particular of the Indian sloth bear. Neutral tint represents hills and thick woods, in which the elephant, the bison, and the tambur roam at large, little troubled by the presence of man. Lastly, portions of the map coloured green, are either grass plains, as those along the foot of the mountains, low forests, as the “Soonderbuns,” or jungles scattered amid cultivated tracts, in which the tiger, the rhinoceros, the wild buffalo, and many varieties of deer may still be successfully sought. The best hog-hunting grounds have been tinted brown; but, besides these places, there are many others throughout the country in which a boar worth riding may occasionally be speared; even the immediate environs of Calcutta itself will now and then give a run, especially early in the cold season, when the rice crops have all, or nearly all, been reaped, and cattle have not yet trodden down every patch of bush or grass.

There is one obstacle to sport which is to be met with

almost everywhere in Bengal, and that is the disinclination of the people to give information or assistance. The European stranger, arriving among them in search of game, will elicit next to nothing of a conclusive nature; the villagers and herds-men may even conceal the fact of tigers and panthers weekly thinning their flocks and herds and causing them no small losses; and they will often be content to suffer thus rather than give exact information or aid. The offer of ready and cheerful assistance is most rare, but in this respect the Mahomedans and the Bengalees in general of the Northern and Eastern districts are better disposed than the Hindoos and the people of the south and west of Bengal. Soft words and fair promises will gain something, threats and strong language nothing, as then they will almost deny a knowledge of their own names, and pretend to, or actually fall into a state of utter imbecility. This apathy apart, the villagers are, as a rule, singularly ignorant of the habits and nature of wild beasts, distinguishing with difficulty one from another, and seldom calling them by their proper names; thus, in many parts of Eastern Bengal, the true country of "Bung," the word "siyal" (for "srigal" in Sanscrit, commonly mispronounced as "hiyal") does duty equally for the tiger, the panther, the civet and fishing cats, the jackal, and the fox.

Nor can the European sportsman, if unknown and not an official of influence, rely on cheerful aid in the matter of supplies for his camp from either the owner or the cultivators of the land over which he proposes to shoot. Unless the visitor be a man in power, the former, although perhaps wealthy, still a mere boor, will offer no aid; while the latter, through their apathetic nature, will keep aloof. The village shop-keeper will retail grain, salt, oil, and other commodities at twenty-five per cent. over the market rates; the fisherman will sell his fish for double the usual tariff, and the herdsman will part with milk at his own price; but more than this must not be expected. So long as the stranger shoots the tigers and panthers which nightly prey on the village cattle, and spears the boars which play havoc with the crops, the

presence of his camp will be tolerated, and his custom on the terms above named will be accepted; moreover, any odds and ends of benevolences in the way of medicine and pecuniary gifts will be received, perhaps ungraciously and without any pretence of gratitude; but ordinary Bengalee complaisance will yield no farther. If in return for ridding them of pests, which render their lives a burden, the young sportsman should expect a basket of country vegetables or fruits, a fish, or a lamb, with which he may vary his somewhat meagre diet, verily let him remember that "Blessed is he who expects nothing;" otherwise he will be disappointed.

In many parts of India the native gentlemen and land proprietors are courteous and hospitable to the European visitor and stranger; and even in Bengal proper the local native grandees of the old school are so generally; but not so those of the modern type, who, however, rarely live on their estates among their tenants. In this respect the people of Assam are worse than those of Bengal; but in that province one seldom meets with persons much above the rank of the common agriculturist. I have asked for a few sugar-canes for my elephants, after killing a pair of man-eaters which had for months ravaged their village, and have been refused by the inhabitants, although it grew abundantly all round; and when one more civil than his fellows brought half-a-dozen of the most "filamentous" (like the late Justice Nuokool Mookerjee, as described by his talented kinsman and biographer, whose name escapes me at the present moment), and flung them down with a grand air, I was asked exactly forty times the local price for the poor little sticks, with which I was expected to make glad the hearts of six or seven elephants, which had done the people such yeoman's service. Supposing no value whatever were put upon the lives of their relatives, still the death of those two tigers was worth to the villagers not less than four thousand rupees, who grudged us a bundle of sugar-canes worth less than a shilling. In some places out of Assam and Bengal proper the people would

spontaneously have cut down an entire field to feed our elephants. It is painful to write thus of a people among whom I have lived so many years, but I write only what I have seen and experienced.

Many persons deny that there is any beauty at all in the somewhat monotonous scenery of Bengal and Behar. Of that of Chota Nagpoor and Orissa none will venture to assert so much I think ; but there is to my mind a prettiness in the former, and combinations of foliage and tints that are decidedly attractive. The mixture of palms, of three or four varieties of bananas, canes, ferns, and bamboos, with trees and shrubs of endless shades of green and yellow, springing almost out of deep streams on which their shadows fall darkly, seems to me worthy of being styled something more than pretty.

Away from the flat plains there are views, in the Himalayan and the Khassia ranges, which cannot be surpassed the wide world over. I have heard it stated by a great traveller that the view from the summit of the Shillong Peak commands a more extensive field, from its peculiar position, than any in the known world. I know not how that may be, but I have seen nothing to approach in grandeur the view of the great peaks of the Himalayas on a clear morning in October, when the rising sun has tipped them with gold, as they stretch away east and west for hundreds of miles, while the foot-hills and the foreground are still dark and indistinct in the lingering shadows of night.

In the Chittagong Hill tracts, in the pathless wilderness of forests south of Cachar and Sylhet, in Santhalia, and in Chota Nagpoor, there are many lovely bits of scenery which would be hard to beat. A ride or a drive from Giridi to Doomree on the Grand Trunk Road will repay anyone who loves the beauties of nature in her wild garb. The passes between Hazaribagh and Ranchi are extremely pretty, and the rapids and falls of the Kurnafoolee at Barkul, and those of the Soobunrikha cannot easily be matched in their particular style.

Men have lived a quarter of a century in Calcutta, and taken their final departure from Bengal by steamer down the Ganges, whose limited experience would naturally induce them to describe the country as flat, monotonous, and uninteresting, judging by what they had seen in the immediate neighbourhood of that inodorous town; but had they journeyed a few hundred miles away from it, their reports would be very different.

Of the climate of Bengal, all that can be said in its favour is, that it is not as bad as some have made it out to be; for, whether in consequence of the great increase of cultivated lands, the gradual drying-up of vast swamps, the retrogression of the "Soonderbuns" further seawards, and a better knowledge of the requirements of the country and its climate, acquired through the bitter experience of a century, it is an undoubted fact that complaints of the climate are not so common as they were, nor are fatal effects upon the European constitution so painfully demonstrated as in the days of Clive and Warren Hastings. The far more frequent visits paid now to Europe than formerly, the almost general consumption of ice, and the more moderate use of calomel and the lancet by a learned profession, combined with the moderation in eating and drinking practised at the present time, have brought about most marked improvement, so that, epidemics of cholera apart, European lives are now almost as good in Bengal as in Europe or America.

The following is a candid picture of the state of Anglo-Indian society in Bengal down to the end of the Eighteenth Century, as recorded by Captain Thomas Williamson, of the Bengal Army, in his "Oriental Field Sports," the second edition of which was published with numerous coloured illustrations in 1819, and was dedicated in grandiloquent style to His Most Gracious Majesty George the Third:—"Such was the height to which every species of excess was then carried, that the most intimate friendship was generally the shortest. I cannot give a better idea of the state of society in Bengal, upwards of twenty years ago, than by observing that I was

one of a party, not exceeding sixteen in number, who met to dine with a friend in the south barracks of Berhampoor, in 1796, when, happening to meet with some friends whom we had not seen since occupying the same quarters with them in 1782, we casually mentioned our old comrades at the same place, but were generally found to wind up our retrospective details with, 'Oh, poor fellow, but he's dead.' The frequent repetition of the apostrophe induced two of us to take pen and paper, when one reckoning up those among our lost friends who had occupied the North, and the other recording the obituary of the South Rangers, we found in the space of little more than twenty years we had lost one hundred and sixty-three in one list and one hundred and fifty-seven in the other ! It is worthy of remark, that our record was confined to such officers and staff as had occupied the cantonments during three years only, and that more than three hundred officers had never been quartered at any time at the station. What adds to the wonder of such an occurrence is, that for the greater part of the time very little change took place, the same corps being fixed for several years. With the exception of a few prudent men, whose moderation rendered them contemptible in the opinion of the major part of us, who were greatly attached, not only to sport, but to every species of debauchery, I believe few quitted Berhampoor in those days untainted by disease, or without some serious injury done to their constitutions."

It is difficult at the present day to realise that the little civil station of Berhampoor was a great cantonment a century ago, in which three hundred hard-riding, hard-fighting, and hard-drinking gentlemen—one may hardly say lived, but died. In those times men in truth came out to Bengal to die at an appalling rate. Where are their graves, shooting, hunting, fighting, and thirsting no more ? The cemeteries of Bengal give no adequate clue to the numbers, the names, and qualities of those who lived and died in the country during the past one hundred and fifty years ; men whose valour founded the British Indian Empire, but whose resting-places are unmarked by stone or inscription. Where do they rest ? The ashes of

the gallant men, whose doughty deeds and wise counsels won for us this great Empire, mingle with the dust on the line of march, upon the battle-field, at the jungle side, and around the ruins of remote residences and factories, and now enrich the soil furrowed by the ploughs of the humble Indian cultivator, their graves forgotten, but their epitaphs indelibly inscribed in history.

The climate of Bengal and Orissa, that of a few districts excepted, is by no means dangerous to European constitutions if precautions dictated by common sense be adopted; that of Behar, Purneah being omitted, is better, while that of Chota Nagpoor, Singhbhoom excepted, is both agreeable and salubrious. Still, having said this much for the climate of the country, it is only right to add that few men can expose themselves to the sun between March and November without suffering in some degree, unless they are abstemious and thoroughly seasoned; and none should run risks without good cause. On the other hand, duty, sport, or inclination urging them, men may brave the heat of the sun for many years, if properly clothed and protected.

From the 1st of November to the 1st of March the weather is magnificent even in Lower Bengal and Orissa; while in Behar and Chota Nagpoor it is cold and dry. As day succeeds day of bright sunshine and bracing north breezes, one is apt to forget that the trials and terrors of the hot and rainy seasons will surely follow. To the above four cold weather months may be added one at each end—viz., March and October—as not excessively warm; April, May and June are very hot; and July, August and September, when the rains are heaviest, are, in general, very disagreeable, through an excess of moisture, superadded to a temperature ranging between 86° and 92° in the day within the house. The store of health, vitality, and energy laid up between November and March, are pretty nearly exhausted by the great heats of the next four months, and then those who are unable to escape to the Hills are left to struggle through the enervating climate of the wet season as well as they can till the advent

of another spell of cold weather brings a new term of health and enjoyment. Those who are fond of outdoor exercises, and of hunting and shooting, undoubtedly enjoy better health than those whose occupations bind them much to the desk, or whose predilections for sedentary life confine them to the interior of their houses under the waving "punkah."





CHAPTER II.

No Close Season or other Protection of Game in Bengal—Unlimited Destruction of Fish Fry—Shooting Season in Bengal—Snipe—Plover—Partridge—Wild Fowl—Cranes—Hog Hunting—Coursing—Deer and Tiger Shooting—Quail—The best Season for the Pursuit of Big Game—Breeding Season—Snakes—Great Destruction of Human Life by Venomous Reptiles.

A GLUTTON at sports, with abundance of leisure, and ample pecuniary resources, might, if so inclined, shoot all the year round in Bengal, the months of June, July and August only excepted. There is no close time, and at no period of the year is game protected for the breeding season, as in some more enlightened parts of India ; so that deer, hares, antelope, floriken, pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, pheasants, spur-fowl, and partridges, plentiful twenty years ago, are fast disappearing ; fortunately the migratory birds remain almost as abundant as ever, although even teal, ducks, and geese have altogether abandoned many marshes and large lakes to which they used to resort in tens of thousands between October and April, and the sportsman must now seek them in remote places to enjoy good sport. Even the commoner varieties of cranes, storks, and herons, which might have been seen almost everywhere in numbers in former times, are becoming rare, except in certain undisturbed localities.

The native "Shikaree" is a true pot-hunter, utterly indifferent as to sex or season, as also to the fact that by destroying game during the breeding-time he injures his own interests, and by killing does and sitting birds he kills the goose which lays the golden eggs and supports him and his

children. However, philosopher as he is, he leaves posterity to take care of itself, and so long as he can earn a rupee by supplying the market in the present, is heedless whether he may earn only a fourth as much in the future. Besides, he argues that if he himself were to abstain, his fellows probably would not do so, but taking advantage of his abstinence, would poach upon his preserves. Lastly, the patriarchal Government does not forbid the destruction of game at any time, nor does it admit that a wholesome and strength-giving article of food is year by year becoming more and more difficult to obtain, except by the comparatively rich.

The same may be said of the wholesale destruction of the fry of fish, now permitted with impunity, to the steady diminution of the most esteemed portion of the Bengalee's daily diet; accordingly, while the population steadily and rapidly increases, articles of food, the most nourishing, become scarcer and dearer for want of a simple enactment, which would preserve them for the benefit of the people.

Fine and well-flavoured fish ascend the many great rivers of Bengal in myriads, to spawn in the smaller streams and marshes during the height of the rainy season. The fry, when about the size of gudgeons, retire with the falling waters in October and November, at which time, and even later, they are caught and killed by the million in nets and traps, set at the mouths of the outfalls of every lake and marsh in the country, and in weirs constructed across the smaller rivers and rivulets. Many kinds, if spared, would grow to ten, twenty, or even forty and fifty pounds in weight, and these, or, at least, many of them, grow rapidly, and multiply marvellously.

It may be an open question whether the protection of game during the breeding season, and its great increase, would or would not compensate for a corresponding additional loss of certain grain crops; but the reckless destruction of the fry of large fish simply causes a diminution of a valued article of food without any compensating advantages, so far as can be seen.

The shooting season in Bengal may be said to commence about the 1st of September, by which date snipe have arrived in considerable numbers from their northern breeding grounds among the endless marshes of Siberia and the highlands of Central Asia. These birds will be found in fair numbers then, in wet patches of low grass and weeds, as well as in the fields in which the transplanted rice is a foot or a foot and a half high, and water lies an inch or two deep on the soft mud. A few plover also arrive about the end of September, and partridges of all kinds may be shot, though poorer than they will be two months later. The heat, of course, is very great, and the strength of the sun's rays between showers, and when the south breeze dies away, is almost overpowering.

By the middle of October snipe are as numerous in Lower Bengal as they ever will be, and lie well in the hot sun; plover have come in, and may be seen in small flocks upon uncultivated fields and ploughed lands; teal appear in flights working southwards, or settling here and there, but not yet in considerable numbers. By the 20th of the month, the delicious cool north breeze will set in, and breathing life and energy into the heat-worn frame, will raise visions of camp-life, good fellowship and fine sport. A little later, vast flocks of wild geese, ducks, teal, and cranes, will wend their way in wedge-like flights to the sea-coast, the green uncut rice offering them no inducement to remain in the interior. The weather is still hot, sometimes oppressively so, till near the end of October, but after the 10th of that month the air of the mornings and evenings is perceptibly cooler, while the nights are cool enough to give refreshing sleep without the aid of the "punkah," and the bracing north breeze induces one now to seek out-door exercise on foot or horseback.

By the middle of November, what is called the nor'-east monsoon has established itself, in a Hibernian sort of way, by blowing steadily from the nor'-west—at least on land, whatever it may do at sea—or off the sand-heads. The rains have ceased, the sky is a clear blue, and the weather is settled

fair for four months or thereabouts, with perhaps one small break about Christmas time. The temperature, still high at mid-day, is cool and agreeable at other hours. Snipe have changed their ground; many rice-fields being quite dry and the crops coming into ear, they have moved to lower lands, and to the borders of lakes and marshes. The snipe-shooter must now be cautious to avoid drying fields of ripening grain, lest the loud curses of the frantic husbandman fall upon his offending head. Partridges have become proverbially plump; plover have increased greatly; teal are plentiful in their ordinary resorts; ducks, geese, and cranes still direct their flights southwards to the seashore, to the sand and mud banks at the mouths of the great rivers, and to the "Chilka," or salt-water lake in the Pooree district. Water-fowl of all kinds—cranes, herons, and storks; the ibis, the bittern, the marabout crane, the stately jabir, in evening-dress and white waistcoat, the "coolen" or "koolang" (*grus cimeria*); the adjutant, slow and solemn, a cross between a head-waiter and a member of council on stilts; waders in varieties innumerable, from the tiniest to the greatest, have all returned to the winter haunts, and may be found there in great numbers, particularly on the low-lying lands about the mouths of the Megna, the Damra, the Mahanuddy, and other queens of rivers in Bengal and Orissa.

With the advent of December "the cold season" has well set in; in Bengal with chilly mornings and evenings, bright cool days, and damp cold nights; in Behar and Chota Nag-poor the air is much colder and drier, and fires are now a comfortable necessity. All the game of the country is in good condition and abundant; pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, partridge, and spur-fowl have fattened on the grain picked up in fields cleared of crops; ducks and geese frequent early and late these same fields, where they may be shot in the fog or haze of early morning by the cautious sportsman, whose gun will carry straight and kill at seventy and eighty yards; for at these times while feeding they are extremely wary, as indeed they always are, except perhaps at high-noon, when they

sleep in the warm sunshine. Snipe-shooting is still good upon the lowest grounds, in the grass and weeds of drying swamps, and on the borders of lakes and stagnant water-courses. Duck and teal-shooting in dug-outs and canoes, on great sheets of water fringed and crossed by reeds and rushes, is now excellent, and will continue to be so till the middle of March, by which time the water will have fallen too low for even such shallow craft, except in the water-ways. Hog-hunting and coursing may be had on "churs," or open plains and islands on and bordering the great rivers. Deer and tiger-shooting from the backs of elephants is possible in a limited way in the lighter bush and grass jungles; but elephants carrying howdahs cannot penetrate the tall and stout reeds, or the rank giant grasses of the heavier coverts, which however are traversed in all directions with ease by the deer, the wild hog, the tiger, the buffalo, and the rhinoceros, along alleys formed by them below the leafy tops, but which are too low for the passage of elephants surmounted by howdahs. By the end of December a trip to the sea-face of the Soonderbuns is tolerably pleasant, but it should be made in good sea-going boats or small steamers, when shots may be obtained at spotted deer and wild hog, probably at a tiger, and possibly at a rhinoceros or two; but a more profitable trip may be made to the mouth of the Damrah river by steamer from Calcutta, and back the same way after spending a week or ten days on the coast and adjacent islets, among the spotted deer, antelope, and wild fowl of all kinds, with the remote chance of meeting with a tiger or a bull buffalo; and if the visitor have the good fortune to induce Mr. C. (a resident of Chandhalu, and a keen sportsman) to accompany him, he ought to secure a satisfactory bag of a miscellaneous sort.

January brings no change; only cooler days and colder nights. The sport to be had then is the same as in the preceding month, but is better, since the rice crops being entirely harvested, the ground is firmer for riding. Game of all kinds, both furred and feathered, is in the very best condition; the

jungle-cock and the black partridge now crow their loudest, and the marsh partridge his noisiest; the night air is musical to the ear of the sportsman, with the clanging notes of migrating cranes and wild geese, and the swish and rush of flights of teal and duck; the peacock sounds morning and evening his loud and discordant cries of alarm or warning, and the deer call to and answer each other in the grass coverts around the camp. It is a season of true enjoyment to the lover of sport, who may now—spear, gun, or rifle in hand—follow his game from seven or eight o'clock in the morning, after a light repast, till sunset, without feeling the heat at all, if he rest for an hour or two for the midday meal in the shade of some tree or rock beside water, to allay the thirst of his followers. By seven or eight in the evening he will enjoy his well-earned dinner, and by ten, after a pipe or cigar, he should be asleep under two or three blankets, outside a hot nightcap of his favourite brew, whatever that may be.

With February the only changes are a warmer air and more clouded sky, and towards its close variable winds. Hunting and shooting have improved; a few of the lighter jungles have been burnt; game remains in good condition for the table, but is wilder. Quail, which came in earlier in Behar, are to be met with in abundance all over the country in the green winter crops and low grass-fields bordering them. In Upper Bengal, Behar, and Chota Nagpore the climate is perfect, and in the last-named province, in Midnapore and Bankurah, bears may now be sought successfully in the rapidly thinning "sal" woods; but not till March will the heaviest jungles be cleared by fire, which the dry and scorching west wind will drive in long lines of roaring flames over miles of flat country overgrown with grass or reeds, or up and down hill sides, destroying completely the undergrowth, and leaving the trees themselves charred and leafless. The heat has sensibly increased; ortolans have come in; birds are donning their nuptial plumage, and the woods are musical with their notes. Snipe now congregate on such low-

lands as still remain moist round the margins of lakes, or in fields of soft mud, in which grow the cold weather crops of rice irrigated from their waters. Towards the end of this month (March) the new grass springs up rich and strong under the influence of the hot sun, and the rain which has fallen with the first nor'-westers of the year. Geese and some ducks begin their migrations northwards to cooler climes, as do at this time the members of the several Governments, the Secretaries, and the heads and tails of departments; the west wind blows hot and strong during the day-time, and those who are left in the plains to carry on their duties, private or official, begin to bewail their fate with good reason.

The serious business of the sportsman, the pursuit of the nobler beasts, now commences in earnest, and is carried on through the scorching days of April and May; in the grass and reed jungles of Purneah, Maldah, Dinagepoor, and Mymensingh, and along the foot of the mountains from Julpigoree to Assam; among the rocks of Manbhoom, and the bison-haunted hill-sides of the southern parts of Chota Nagpoor, and the "tributary mehals" of Orissa.

By the middle of April the migrating wild-fowl have all left, except a few pairs of the ruddy sheldrakes, blue-winged teal, and some snipe, although individuals of the last may be met with as late as the 10th or 15th May. These are, however, birds injured in some way, and unable or unwilling to commence the long flight northwards, or confirmed old bachelors for whom conjugal joys have no attraction. Game birds have commenced nesting in April; stags have cast their antlers; and the tiger and the bison, now driven for want of water from deep woods into more accessible coverts, engage the attention of the sportsman, to whom April and May are the choicest months, while they are to others a season of tribulation and martyrdom.

By the middle of June, the monsoon rains set in violently; guns and rifles are put away in air-tight receptacles; spears are hung up, but cleaned and polished daily, and the trophies

of the chase of the past season are looked up, dried when the sun breaks out hotly, to be repacked or soldered down in tin, and despatched home to friends and relatives.

In some parts of the country tigers may be successfully sought and shot in August, when the rivers are at their highest flood and the country is a vast sheet of water; but the sport is such as to attract the keenest sportsman only, since the travelling in boats and the beating with elephants, the rank and dripping coverts swarming with leeches and vermin, are not agreeable recreations in themselves; besides, the alternations of extreme heat and damp, the ducking in a heavy shower, followed by a simmering in the hot sun immediately afterwards, are neither pleasant nor wholesome. On the other hand, the finding of a couple or more of savage and half-starved tigers on a grassy islet ro a bush and tree-covered hummock, is not without its charms, but there is no gainsaying the fact, that sport followed in this manner and at this season, has as many attendant discomforts as camping in tents in the cold season has pleasures and enjoyments.

I have a vivid recollection of one such trip, undertaken in the month of August with a friend and brother-sportsman, which may serve as a sample of that kind of experience; more as to the mode of travelling than as regards the sport obtained on that occasion, for that was very little indeed, our expedition having been deferred unavoidably till the first great flood of the season had somewhat abated, and the tigers, driven into the nearest spots of high ground on the rising of the waters, had got away elsewhere on their partial subsidence.

Our elephants, seven or eight in number, had been sent ahead of us, accompanied by a boat, carrying the "howdahs" and other impedimenta, and the left bank of the Megna, opposite the village, or rather cluster of villages, called "Atgaon" in Mymensingh, named as the rendezvous. Leaving the little Station of Cornillah after dinner in our fast "bujra," with another boat serving as kitchen and tender, we found

ourselves early next morning rowing due north over a sea of green grass or growing rice, with here and there a few acres of open water where deepest, or where the course of a river caused a slight stream or current. As the sun rose, the south wind set in, and presently increasing to a smart breeze, enabled us to hoist sails; and thus we sped due northwards over the rippling jheel water, and through the waving grass and paddy, bending to the wind at six or seven miles an hour; occasionally sticking for a few minutes among tall reeds or thickly growing weeds and water lilies, and poling our way through them by sheer weight of our boats, propelled by eight or ten pairs of arms.

In this manner we sailed all that day and the following night, guiding our course by certain distant land marks known to the crews, and by compass when they failed us or were considered doubtful; the low Tipperah hills lay on our right, and the great Megna river on our left, beyond a line of hamlets and trees miles away to the west. Although there was no want of water-fowl, they were not of the kinds considered game, and only such as remain and breed in the country, whistling and cotton or goose-teal, coots of many varieties, water-hens, water-rails, jacanas, herons, storks, cranes and bittern; the lesser and greater cormorant, and the snake-bird, besides many others small and great; the solitary game-bird being the "kyah," or marsh partridge, which had by that time with them their young broods, now able to fly and forage for themselves. Of four-footed game there was not one, tigers alone excepted, and these might or might not be found upon the little islets standing out above water in the midst of a vast sea of grass and rice; on this trip they were not found, though sought diligently for a week.

The mosquitoes and other insects, which attacked us in battalions the night after leaving Cornillah, now came upon us in brigades, making life a burden after sunset, and compelling us to retire within our nets, afraid even to burn a lamp by the light of which we might read, or play a game of chess or picquet. Sitting in our fore-cabin being out of the question,

we were obliged to eat our dinner on deck before sunset, and to retire early to our beds after smoking a cigar, which we did with our legs wrapped up in blankets, hands in pockets, and newspapers spread on the seats of our cane chairs for reasons too obvious to require explanation.

The loudness of the hum and chirping of insects on land in the rainy season is something surprising to one who has never lived within the tropics, but it is nothing compared with the far louder "voices of the night" in a wide "jheel" in Bengal, where the croaking and flopping of frogs, the sharp "chit-chit" of a large kind of grass-hopper, the twitter of small birds, the calls of coots and water-hens, and the splashes of rising and diving fishes, all combine, with the flutter and buzz of myriads of small insects, to create a volume of sound, never ceasing or varying, sufficient to keep awake the seven sleepers. But this is not all; conceive, in addition, a temperature close upon ninety degrees, the grunting and grumbling of a dozen servants and boatmen, and the slapping of as many pairs of hands, and then picture to yourself a night on the "jheels" in August or September, when not a breath of air stirs the leaves of the lotus, or moves the grass.

The depth of water in the great Tipperah and Sylhet "jheels" varies from ten to twenty feet during the season of rains; nevertheless a coarse description of rice will be found growing in all but the deepest parts, which will survive submersion even, if not prolonged beyond three days. At a rough estimate this area of inundated country cannot be less than eight thousand square miles, and is probably more; it may therefore be asked, where do the people live who sow and reap the grain? Well; they live, or rather vegetate, in hovels built upon the banks of rivers and water-courses, and on little narrow hummocks in the midst of the waters, just standing out of them a foot or two above the highest flood level. Every householder possesses one canoe at least, without which he would be a prisoner in his house, unable to earn his living, and in such he makes his little journeys to

market, or pays visits to friends, but the women and children seldom leave their homes for months together. The few stunted and miserable cattle owned by the inhabitants are tied down by the head, just below high water mark, so that they stand knee and hock deep, and being unable, of course, to graze, are fed with coarse grass and rushes cut and brought in daily, till the inundation subsides, when they are once more permitted to forage for themselves in the "jheels," into which they wade deep for such succulent weeds as they may chance to find till January or February, when the bottoms are left dry and covered with a thick growth of a good and nourishing kind of grass.

It is needless to say that these basins of almost still water swarm with fish of many varieties and of all sizes up to such as measure five and six feet in length, and form, together with the water-fowl, which are trapped now and then, the choicest food of the people, for of fruit and vegetables there are none, except a few plantains and a kind of bean, or here and there a pumpkin. In the cold season, between November and April, another crop of rice is raised, and the inhabitants again find some use in their legs beyond standing upon them on land, or upon their boats. At that season, too, wild-fowl of all sorts, from the snipe and the grebe to ducks, geese, and giant storks, abound all over this country, and provide excellent sport both on foot and from light canoes; but in walking and wading one needs to tread with caution among weeds and along narrow paths on account of the venomous snakes which also abound, and which descend from the roofs of the houses in which they have harboured during the inundation, to spread over the drying fields now swarming with their prey.

Of the frightful numbers of these reptiles sometimes collected upon dry places, we had on the trip I have referred to a fair example. Stepping out of the "bujra" into our howdahs, brought alongside its roof, we formed line upon a small islet of about eight or ten acres covered with low bushes, a likely spot to hold a tiger, or even a family of tigers, a

considerable village being within an easy swim. We found however no animal upon it, not even an otter, only many "kyah" partridges, and a horrid kind of black cobra in hundreds, coiled together in knots upon the branches of the less thickly leaved bushes, on some of which there must have been a dozen at least, all still and seemingly torpid, though probably only asleep after gorging themselves. It must be confessed that beating under such circumstances was not pleasant, but it had to be done so long as there was a hope left of a tiger being put up; but when that was gone, at the earnest and urgent entreaties of our "Mahouts" we each fired a couple of barrels of shot into clumps of stunted trees festooned with scores of the dreadful reptiles, and, turning, fled to our boats, moored some yards from the shore by the cautious crews, so as to be beyond the spring of a tiger from the dry land.

That deaths caused by snake bite in such districts should be extremely numerous—as they are in fact—can be no matter for surprise; the wonder is that they are not far more so, especially during the inundation time, since the dwelling-houses, straw stacks, and cattle-sheds swarm with cobras and "karaits," while neither the bungarus nor the hamadryas is uncommon, to make no mention of other varieties less venomous and distinguished than those named.

In travelling over such tracts as these, it is no rare thing to see a snake swimming off to the boat, with the intention of boarding her in search of rats and mice; and although fatal accidents are extremely rare among European residents of India, a fair and judicious amount of caution is always necessary to avoid them. Happily Europeans when shooting on foot wear stout boots or gaiters, and at other times, whether at home or abroad, such covering of the feet and legs as may wholly or partially arrest the injection of the venom below the skin, or even break the points of the poison fangs. Thus Europeans enjoy an immunity which the natives have not; at least not the almost naked and unshod hundred and eighty out of the two hundred millions whose daily bread

is earned in the fields and woods, and who are destroyed by thousands every year, notwithstanding the rewards given for the destruction of venomous snakes at all district and sub-district headquarters; but, after all, the good done in this way extends to only a small proportion of the whole country, and thus the tale of deaths reported year by year does not materially decrease, nor is it likely to decrease until the people see fit to defend themselves by killing every reptile met with, undeterred by superstitious fear and notions. Official returns give the deaths caused by snake-bite annually as about 20,000 in British India, but of course the actual number is very much greater, since the police who collect the statistics cannot possibly receive reports of all; thus a fourth, or even a third, are probably never heard of or recorded.

We proceeded for several days in the manner above described as far north as Chatuk, on the Soarma river, till the low, pale blue, and almost level line of the Khasya hills rose high and distinct, and not a tiger did we find, hearing the same story everywhere that the tigers had gone to higher grounds some weeks before our arrival. We beat a dozen small isolated hummocks and the heavier jungles round Atgaon all to no purpose; recent lairs of tigers we found, also abundance of bones of their victims, and we might too have filled our boat daily with water-fowl of miscellaneous sorts had we chosen to do so, but beyond shooting sufficient to feed our servants and crews, we did not molest them. Our elephants appeared to enjoy themselves mightily, eating all day long as they waded or swam with the "Mahouts," or their "mates," on their bare backs, accompanied always by the boat with the "howdahs," chains, ropes, grain, and other necessities. Whenever we desired to beat a jungle on dry land, the boats were moored, the "howdahs" fastened on, and we mounted from the boat itself, without putting foot to ground at all; and except buying some fish occasionally from passing fishermen, we depended entirely on supplies taken with us for the entire trip.

To the "griffin" such an expedition is curious and interesting, but to older hands it is irksome, unless diversified by some good sport with tigers. The naturalist will find ample scope for his studies, and will gain experience in many ways, in his own person as well as through other means. The face of the country being covered deep under water, the air is not unwholesome, and malaria need not be feared till October at least.





CHAPTER III.

How, when, and where Game should be sought in Bengal—Rapid Decrease of Game—Causes thereof—A famous Hog and Buffalo Hunting Locality—Immense Sounders of Wild Hog—The Arms Act—Favourite Resorts of Game—The “Soonderbuns”—Good Shooting Grounds much contracted—The best Months and the best Localities for the Pursuit of Game of all Kinds at the Present Time.

A SKETCH of the climate and physical characteristics of the country having been given, some suggestions may now be offered as to the game to be found in it, and when and where it should be sought; but this is no easy task, seeing how rapidly changes follow upon an ever-increasing population and a fast-widening area of cultivation, so that where buffaloes, deer, and wild hog were plentiful thirty years ago, a stray boar only can be met with at the present day. In 1865 I was encamped with two companions on the skirts of a considerable village in Orissa, some three or four miles only from the sea. Seated comfortably in our long easy chairs after a hard and successful day of buffalo and spotted deer-stalking, we commanded at sunset an extensive view from our camp of grass lands a couple of miles in breadth, lying between cultivated fields and the sandy hummocks which form a low and uneven ridge immediately above high-water mark. Our vision embraced many miles of this kind of country, but without using our binoculars we could distinguish within a space of two or three miles, at least three score wild buffaloes, and between two and three hundred spotted deer feeding in the open, either singly or in groups, which had come out from the shelter of the bushes and tall grass, resorted to during the

heat of the day. The moon, nearly at the full, was rising over the sea opposite, the sun sinking below the landward horizon ; the air of a January evening was deliciously refreshing after the fatigues of a hot day, for the days are sultry in Orissa, even in the cold season ; and thus as we smoked our cheroots and sipped pleasant beverages, enjoying the beauty of the scene before us, we congratulated ourselves on the favourable prospects of good sport on the morrow. Some fifteen years later my camp was once more pitched on the very same spot ; the village was unchanged, the cultivation no broader, and the grass lands and sandy ridge presented no marked alterations, but not a track of buffalo or spotted deer could be found ; the only foot-prints to be seen, and these by no means numerous, were of black buck. What had become of the game ? No satisfactory reply could be elicited on this subject from the people, at least none which satisfied my mind. The villagers said that the buffaloes and deer had been all shot by the European sportsmen of the district, or by the native "Shikarees," who now possessed guns in great numbers ; but as I happened to know who were the European sportsmen, how few in number, and how little at leisure to visit such remote tracts, I rejected the first reason as only partially correct ; but for the second there seemed a better basis, as not only the "Shikarees" themselves had increased, but those who formerly plied their calling with bow and arrow, a matchlock, a Monghyr fowling-piece, or gun and trap only, now carried some good English guns, and others the superannuated Brown Bess ; nevertheless, it seemed improbable that even with firearms, if loaded with the weak native-made powder, they could in the course of a few years have completely exterminated such powerful beasts as the wild buffalo, whatever they might have effected among the herds of deer. Probably the "Shikarees" had wounded more than they killed, and had driven all survivors away into the heavy coverts further south ; be that as it may, where buffalo and deer might be counted by hundreds over a space of thirty or forty miles, hardly one remained fifteen years later.

In the following instance the cause of the disappearance of the game was clear enough. In 1854, having been transferred to Midnapoor from a distant district, and being ignorant of its capabilities in the way of sport, except in respect of bears, for which it was then famous, I had to find out for myself where to look for game in general, and for my favourite amusement of hog-hunting in particular. Accordingly, having heard of the existence of buffalo and wild hog in the grass lands reserved for the manufacture of salt, I found myself, one February afternoon, upon the high embankment which then divided the salt and rice lands at Sourabaria, some six miles south-west of Tumlook. Seated upon my Arab horse, I gazed with astonishment and delight over a grass plain of great extent, about the centre of which were two small "jheels," or marshes, around which grazed some sixty or eighty buffalo, in two distinct herds; and better still, I saw the dark round backs of great numbers of pigs rooting and wallowing in the dank grass and rushes. Turning to some villagers, or salt manufacturers, I inquired whether the animals I saw were tame or wild. "Wild, of course," answered they; "no tame animals are allowed to trespass on the Government salt fuel lands." Jumping off my little horse, I saw that his girths and bitting were all right, remounted, and taking a light double-barrelled gun from one of my attendants, I rode down into the plain. There were spears out with me, and the horse I rode was a well-known pig-sticker, but I feared that the buffaloes would desert this ground if disturbed by my first hunting hog; whereas, the latter would remain, whether I rode the buffalo or not. I resolved promptly, therefore, upon giving the latter my first attention, and reserving the others for the morrow.

As I approached the nearest "jheel," an embanked water-course, fringed with bushes, had to be crossed, and from it a sounder of pigs rose and trotted off towards the centre of the plain. After passing the water-course I found myself first on a tolerably level and sound plain, covered with a

coarse description of grass, and afterwards on wet ground, uneven and overgrown with rushes, and much cut up by the rootings of the wild hogs, but still sound at bottom. By this time the pigs, rising as I advanced, numbered half a hundred before me, all heading towards the nearest piece of water, on the farthest side of which a herd of buffalo were grazing in security.

The country being quite new to me and the direction of the strong coverts unknown, I proceeded cautiously, reconnoitring my ground before resolving how to approach the herd, still undisturbed by my manœuvres. Skirting the first "jheel," I advanced to the space between the two, putting up many more hog and getting into deeper ground, over which I did not care to ride in an attack upon the buffaloes, which might take it into their heads to turn the tables upon me and become the hunters. However, fortune favouring, I got through the heavy ground before arriving within two hundred yards of the herd, which now saw and faced me menacingly, shaking their heads and advancing a few steps after the manner of their kind, till first one and then another hesitated and retreated slowly, looking over their backs, heads held high, and tails tucked in tightly. This was enough for me to know that the herd did not mean to charge on that occasion; raising a shout therefore I rode upon it, put it in full flight, and in five minutes was among the careering animals, riding, shooting, and re-loading, until the first joined by the second herd, both, after a wild gallop over four or five miles, dashed into the deep bed of the "Kapye" river, and swam over to the opposite side, leaving me to retrace my steps and despatch two or three wounded animals, which, unable to keep up with the others had fallen behind. I had also to look up the others slain outright in the run westwards to the river.

This evening I must have had at least five hundred hog, great and small, on the move before and around me, and the ground was nowhere such as to prevent hard riding. The next morning, taking out two horses and a pony, I speared six

fine boars, and obtained a good general knowledge of the line usually taken by the animals when roused. I also picked up another buffalo, a bull, left wounded by the herd among the bushes and trees on the river bank, and this beast showing a disposition to be "nasty," and disinclined to leave the covert, had to be accounted for on foot, and was shot as he charged up to within a spear's length; the herd meanwhile had left this ground altogether for the time. For four years I shot and hunted over this and the adjoining country, on both banks of the "Kapye" and the "Huldee" rivers, enjoying splendid sport, especially hog-hunting, mostly alone, but occasionally joined by friends from Calcutta and Barrackpoor, who gave me the pleasure of their company for a few days, and doubled the enjoyment of my favourite sport by their presence. The buffaloes had deserted that country before I left, and gone southwards into Hidgelee, but up to 1860 the wild hog were almost as numerous as ever, the sows and squeakers never being molested, and native hunters being few and far; but ten years afterwards, when the Government salt manufacture had been closed, the grass and fuel land rented out, and the "jheels" drained, and the land sown with rice, hardly a pig remained where they used to be found in hundreds. The disappearance of the game in this case arose, of course, from the grass and marsh lands having been reclaimed, and not from its destruction by "Shikarees" or others. So, too, in the Noakholly district, the grass "churs" of which swarmed with buffalo, hog-deer and wild hog, thirty years ago, only a few of the last will now be met with in the rice fields, which have succeeded the grass and tamarisk-covered plains of that district.

One of the commonest arguments advanced in favour of the abolition of the Arms Act, is that, restricting the possession of firearms to a few, it prevents cultivators from protecting their crops and herds from the ravages of wild beasts; but the fact is, that in the course of late years, firearms have been trebled in the interior of Bengal, and every man of honest repute has it in his power to possess a gun, the fee

charged for a license costing only tenpence per annum, which no one would grudge to pay who could afford to buy a gun or a matchlock for thirty or forty shillings. As a general rule the cultivator, on whose behalf the Arms Act is condemned, very rarely has recourse to firearms for the protection of his crops, they being used mostly by the well-to-do householder, or the village loafer, against birds of all kinds in and out of season, and by professional "Shikarees" for shooting deer and pigs. The result is the gradual disappearance of birds, hares, deer and wild hog, while tigers remain much the same in most places where the jungles have not been cut down, and panthers have undoubtedly increased everywhere, the village sportsmen and gunners not caring to try conclusions with such customers, much preferring to leave them to be dealt with by the professional hunters or European sportsmen.

The ordinary food of tigers and panthers—deer and wild swine—being diminished, these animals are compelled, as a matter of course, to prey upon the village herds and flocks, and thus the gain by the harvesting of more grain is counter-balanced by the loss of more sheep, goats and cattle. It is further remarked, that under these conditions the man-eater, whether tiger or panther, more frequently than formerly carries off people while going to or from the weekly market, in the evening gloaming; the herdsman from the shelter of a shady bush on a hot afternoon; or the woman while bathing or fetching water at mid-day within hail of her home and neighbours. So long, therefore, as the coverts remain, and the grass plains are uncultivated, the destruction of deer, hog and other game will rather tend to increase the losses among the peasants' flocks and herds, through the depredations of tigers and panthers; and to the axe and the plough, and not to the gun in the hands of villagers, will be due ultimately the protection of the country from the ravages of these terrible pests.

In Bengal the favourite haunts of wild animals are wide plains of tall grasses and reeds, more or less swampy, according

to the seasons, and traversed by rivers or rivulets never quite dry. The banks of such water-courses, when darkly shaded by rank bushes and grass, present the most tempting lairs by their coolness, and near vicinity to water in plenty; more especially if cultivation, and a few scattered hamlets with their herds be not very distant, the tiger, the panther, the buffalo, the marsh and hog-deer, and the wild hog will be very abundant in these localities; and it is in such coverts rather than in extensive tree and reed jungles that large game should be sought. I have walked for weeks through the trackless wilderness of hills and woods which lie between the southern frontiers of Sylhet and Cachar and the borders of Chittagong, where wild animals are rarely molested by man, and have been astonished at the paucity of game, and at the oppressive and deathlike silence of the gloomy forests. In these vast wildernesses, the elephant and the "gayal" are numerous, and the true monarchs; the sambur and barking-deer are common; the python, the wild hog, and the Malayan bear less so; whereas the tiger and the panther are rarely met with in the deepest solitudes. One may traverse miles of such forests without seeing a living bird or beast, the stillness and deep gloom at mid-day hardly broken by the twitter of a bird, or the chirp of an insect; there the enemy most to be dreaded and to be guarded against, is neither the crouching tiger nor the monster python, but savage man; as cruel and as treacherous as the one, and as difficult to detect among the trailing creepers and the undergrowth as the other.

Among the hills and woods of Santhalia, game of every description is extremely scarce; in Chota Nagpoor it is certainly more abundant in some parts, such as Manbhoom, Singhboom, and the south-western portions of Lohaduggah; but in none of them, though well wooded, plentifully diversified by hills, rocks, and running streams, and seemingly suitable in every way, is game, whether feathered or furred, as abundant as in the savannahs of the Terai, the swampy plains of Purneah, Maldah, and Dinagepoor, or the grass-covered "churs" of Rungpoor and Mymensingh.

In the "Soonderbuns" between the mouths of the Hooghly and Megna rivers, tigers, deer, wild hog, rhinoceros, and buffalo are abundant, and probably are increasing, since comparatively few are ever shot, and the decrease in the forest area is so slow as to be unlikely to affect the numbers of its wild denizens. Spotted deer may there be seen in herds; but their pursuit by stalking is rendered extremely difficult by the nature of the thickets, and is more than ordinarily dangerous by the tigers, which also abound, having the reputation of being the most fearless and the most confirmed man-hunters and man-eaters of any in India. Nor is it possible to follow sport in the "Soonderbuns" on the backs of elephants, which can neither penetrate the tree jungle, nor cross the endless streams which intersect it at every turn, and are as deep with salt water at flood time as they are with bottomless mud at ebb.

The localities, then, where good sport with big game may be enjoyed are by no means numerous, and are yearly shrinking, but happily some still remain in Bengal, and those may now be indicated, together with the best times for paying them visits with a view to sport.

Hog-hunting may be said to commence in December, as soon as the rice crops have been harvested, but it comes in a little earlier on the "churs" or islets, and along the banks of the great rivers. This sport is still good in the districts of Pubna, Moorshedabad, Purneah, and Rungpoor, and may be enjoyed in Nudiga, Jepore, Furreedpoor, Mymensingh, Tipperah, Noakholly, Maldah, the twenty-four Pergunnahs, Midnapoor, and Champarun, districts once famous for the excellence of their hog-hunting, but no longer such as they once were, owing to the gradual conversion of grass-covered plains into rice fields. When the monsoon rains flood the country, the hog hunter in Bengal may hang up his spears for six months, for in some parts of Purneah alone can it be attempted in the rainy season. Coursing begins and ends about the same dates as hog-hunting; it is still good in a few districts, Nudiga, Pubna, Mymensingh, Rungpoor, Purneah, and Maldah, in

Bengal; Champarun, Durbhunga and Sarun, in Behar; and in some parts of Pooree and Cuttack; but hares become scarcer year by year, and coursing is now often restricted to foxes and jackals, thanks to the absence of any close season for game.

Tiger-shooting: The regular season may be said to commence early in March, and to end with the setting in of the rains in June, the best districts being Maldah, Purneah, Bogra, Dinagepoor, Mymensingh, and Julpigoree. A few tigers are still to be found in Kayshye, Dana, Backergunge, Balasore, Bhagulpoor, Monghyr, in the Kymon hills, in Shahabad, in the jungles of the southern portion of Gya, about the foot of Pareesnath, in Hazaribagh, and lastly, in great numbers in the Soonderbuns; but tiger-shooting as a sport can be followed systematically with a line of elephants only in the half-dozen districts first named; in the others much will depend upon chance, and good sport cannot be relied upon with any certainty.

Bear-shooting commences and ends with the will of the sportsman; bears frequenting high lands and rugged hills may be sought and shot all the year round, but the best season is between February and July, and the best districts are Midnapoor, Bankoora, Manbhoom, Hazaribagh, Singbhoom, and Darjeeling; there are a few bears still in Gya, Shahabad, Lohaduggah, and Santhalia; in Julpigoree too they are to be met with frequently. I think they have disappeared altogether from Dana, where they were common many years ago; and if any remain still in Mymensingh, they will be found only in the Muddoopoor forest and its immediate vicinity. Bears are fast disappearing, and can be met with in any numbers only in the first five districts above named.

Bison-shooting: The "gaur," may be found in April and May in the southern parts of Lohaduggah, in Singbhoom, and in the tributary mehals of Cuttack, but never in considerable numbers; they penetrate eastward as far as Manbhoom, and have been shot within the memory of the present generation in the western parts of Midnapoor and Bankoorah.

The "gayal" or "mittin" is to be met with in the foot hills of the Himalayas, and the forests of Chittagong and the hill tracts.

Elephant-shooting is now very properly forbidden altogether in the Lower Provinces, in which considerable numbers are caught annually. These animals are still very numerous in Chittagong, the hill tracts, Hill Tipperah, in the forests south of Cachar and Sylhet, in the Garo hills, in the Cuttack tributary mehals, and in Singbhoom; a few wander eastward as far as Manbhoom, and I have seen their tracks in Hazaribagh, Midnapoor, and even in Bankoorah. About ten or fifteen years ago there was a herd in the Santhal Pergunnahs, but I have not heard of more than one or two there of late years.

Rhinoceros-shooting can now be got only in Julpigoree between December and July, March, April, and May being the best months; they are still to be seen in some numbers in their favourite localities, and are very numerous in the Soonderbuns also, where their pursuit hardly repays one for the toil and disappointments incurred. They have disappeared from Purneah and the neighbourhood of Rajmahal and Sikrigully, where they were plentiful fifty years ago. The Malayan two-horned variety exists in small numbers in the forests of the Chittagong hill tracts, and is said to wander as far north as the southern limits of Cachar and Sylhet.

Buffalo-shooting may be had almost all the year round, but at its best in the cold and hot seasons. Buffaloes exist in considerable numbers still in the Soonderbuns, in Backergunge, in the woods and plains of the Cuttack and Balasore sea-coast, and in lesser numbers in Purneah, Julpigoree, Maldah, and Dinagepoor. They were very plentiful in Noakholly, Furreedpoor, Dana, Jepore, Mymensingh, and Hidgelee (Midnapoor) thirty years ago, when very good sport was to be had both in riding them down on horseback and stalking them on foot; but they have almost totally disappeared from these districts, nor are those now found anywhere in Bengal or Orissa to be compared for size and ferocity

with those of former times, when they were the masters of the plains.

Deer-shooting is still to be had in many districts, the best season for it being between September and March—in other words, between the time the stags' antlers are in prime condition and that when they commence to be shed. There are sambur on and around Pareesnath, in Hazaribagh, Singbhoom, and Lohaduggah, a few also in the Khymon hills, in Shahabad, and in the woods and hills of southern Gya. They are abundant in the forests of Chittagong and the hill tracts, but are comparatively small, and carry antlers in no way to be compared with those of the sambur of Central India and the Neilgherries. The marsh-deer, or "vara-singha" of Bengal, still survive in very small herds in Maldah, Dinagepoor, and on the outskirts of the Soonderbuns, and in somewhat larger ones in Julpigoree, where they were very numerous thirty years ago, as they still are in many parts of Assam, where I have seen this handsome deer in herds of fifty and sixty, in savannahs dotted with swamps and pools of water. The spotted deer, once very common almost all over the country west of the Megna, have become rare, and are fast being exterminated. In the Soonderbuns alone they are still as abundant as ever, and there are still a few in Hidgelee, along the coast of Balasore and Cuttack, and in the woods of Pooree. I have seen a small herd in Maldah, and there is a fair sprinkling of them in Gya. Hog-deer will be found in great quantities in Purneah; they used literally to swarm on the "churs" of the Megna, the Brahmapootra, and the Ganges. So numerous were they on them at one time, that I have known two guns to bag a hundred in three days. There are still a few left in Dinagepoor, Rungpoor, and Mymensingh, and perhaps rather more in Maldah. The barking-deer will be found in almost all the dry coverts on high lands, and on hill sides, but never in great numbers anywhere so far as my experience extends. They are also to be met with in the Soonderbuns, though I have not seen them there myself. The tiny mouse-deer may be occasionally, but rarely, met with in

the wooded hills of the southern parts of Chota Nagpoor. I have seen them on the Khasia hills near Cherra Poonjee, but never on or near Pareesnath, although the hills about that neighbourhood are very well suited to them, and do not differ much from those of Singbhoom, on which this deer is still to be met with now and then.

Antelope-shooting is now restricted to narrow limits. Not very long since black-buck stalking might have been had in perfection in Pooree, Cuttack, Balasore, Midnapoor, Purneah, Gya, Shahabad, and Julpigoree, and even in Moorsshedabad and Nudiga on a small scale; but now in Pooree, Shahabad, and Gya only may the stalker hope for such success as will repay him for his time and labour.

The gazelle, or "chickara," will be found in small numbers in Chota Nagpoor, in the southern jungles of Gya and Shahabad, and in the western parts of Midnapoor and Bankoora. The four-horned antelope I have seen nowhere in Bengal, and only rarely in the south of Chota Nagpoor; while the neelgau will occasionally turn up in the Khymon hills, in the jungles of Gya and Chota Nagpoor, and very rarely in Hazaribagh. The season for the pursuit of all these antelopes is that between the close of the rains and June.

Unless something be done, and that ere long, to check the extermination now going on of all these beautiful and useful creatures, deer of all kinds will soon disappear completely from all but the most inaccessible hills and forests; and it seems improbable that a single black buck will, twenty years hence, survive the indiscriminate slaughter, in season and out of season, now permitted among the few herds which still remain in the Lower Provinces.

There are not now many districts in which sportsmen can say to themselves, To-day or to-morrow we will have a day's partridge-shooting, or take a turn at the jungle-fowl, pheasant, floriken, or even water-fowl; it is only in a few that good quail-shooting can be relied upon, so that snipe afford the only bag that can be calculated upon with any certainty in Bengal. The migratory habits, together with

their swift and irregular flight, protect snipe from certain extermination in common with all other game birds, beautiful in themselves and valuable and wholesome food for man. Suffice it to state briefly, that good quail-shooting may be had between November and June in some parts of northern and western Behar, and more or less in Bengal and Orissa a little later in the season, according to the crops grown and other conditions of the different localities. There used to be excellent jungle-fowl and pheasant-shooting in Chittagong, and some is still to be had immediately after the rice crops have been harvested, in December and January.

I think there are two varieties of the jungle-fowl, the black and the red; but I cannot state with any satisfaction to myself where these occur, and where they do not. Jerdon describes two only, the red and the grey. Possibly his grey jungle-fowl is the same as that I have designated black, as more correctly indicating the general colouring of the cock bird, while the hen is undoubtedly a brownish grey, more brown I think than grey. Unless I greatly err, both varieties are to be found in Chota Nagpoor, and along the Grand Trunk Road, west of Govindpoor; "muthoara" and the polyplecton in the eastern and north-eastern jungles, and the "kaly" pheasant is found in the northern Himalayan woods. The game bag in these localities may be varied by the addition of a few snipe, and even an occasional woodcock.

There is still some fair jungle-fowl-shooting to be got on the Grand Trunk Road between Topechansi and Doomri in the months of December and January; and the sportsman may at the same time kill a few partridges, two or three spur-fowl, as many pea-fowl, a hare, and, possibly, a barking-deer; but I do not consider the sport good enough to attract one from any great distance. In Hazaribagh, too, the same kind of shooting can be obtained, and a mixed bag made up by the end of the day.

The rock-pigeon may also fall to the gun between Nimia-ghat and the river Sone, but in no numbers, and only the smaller variety, more of them frequenting the high, bare

ground near the Trunk Road, where it strikes that river, than any other spot along this line up to the Sone.

The floriken will very seldom be flushed at the present day south of the Ganges, no matter how suitable the ground may be, and the bastard floriken, or "likh," as seldom; in fact, neither should be calculated upon in the bag expected by the sportsman, whether he beats on foot, or with a line of elephants, in Bengal elsewhere than in Purneah, Maldah, the valley of the "Purnobhaba" in Dinagepoor, and the "churs" of Rungpoor and Mymensingh. A floriken may occasionally be flushed in the Champarun, Durbhunga, and Bhangulpoor districts, on the plains along the Terai, and now and again in Dana and Bograh; but, except as a rare visitor, it will not be met with south of those districts, although they were by no means uncommon formerly on the "churs" of the Bhagirutty (Hooghly) river, as low down as Chogdaha. I have never seen one on the "churs" of the Megna below Naraingunge, nor ever heard of one being shot below that place, though why a stray bird or two should not occasionally visit the grass plains and mustard-fields of those islets, which resemble in every way their favourite feeding-grounds, only a little further north, it is hard to guess. Probably as they are being thinned they restrict themselves to their choicest grounds in the Terai, in Assam, and in some parts of the districts above named.

There are three varieties of partridges in the lower provinces—the black, the grey, and the marsh, or "kyah;" the two former will be found among grass and bushes near cultivation, and the last in tree and reed coverts, on river banks, or round swamps, and frequently in considerable numbers, as in Sylhet, where I have put up as many as fifty in the course of an hour or two while shooting snipe in rice fields, enclosed by reed jungle. The last variety, likewise, is tolerably plentiful in certain parts of Maldah, Dinagepoor, and Purneah. The black and the grey, it is said, will not be found together in the same coverts or on the same ground, and this may be so as the general rule, but I have shot them both

during a morning stroll, and, on one occasion, when out snipe-shooting with a friend, we obtained a specimen of each of the three varieties, and all being in good condition were served up at dinner, the superiority being awarded to the marsh partridge. Although blacks and greys are distributed over nearly the whole of Bengal, Behar, Chota Nagpore and Orissa, with the exception of the districts of Jepore, Khoolna, Backergunge, Noakholly, Tipperah, and one or two others, they are nowhere sufficiently numerous to make up a bag of even twenty brace to the gun during any morning or afternoon; in fact, half that number rarely falls now to a single gun in the day. Where black or grey partridges are to be found, hares and two or three varieties of quail may also be expected. The best mixed bag I have ever known, including a brace or leash of hares, partridges, a few quail and plover, and ten or a dozen snipe, was sixty brace, all told, falling to three guns, and all three pretty straight ones too. It is therefore impossible to name particular localities where good bags of partridge may be depended upon as certain compensation for five or six hours' trudging through grass and bushes.

Unlike partridge-shooting, snipe-shooting is not only more general but more satisfactory in its results to anyone able and willing to walk through mud and weeds under a burning sun in the hottest time of the day. Large bags are common around Calcutta, and in the Nudiga, Jepore, Hooghly, Pubna and Moorshedabad districts during September and October. This bird does not affect the high laterite tracts, and is comparatively scarce in Burbhoom, Bankoorah, and others, in which a bag of ten couple is considered a fair one, and, indeed, above the average. In January and February, however, excellent sport may be obtained in Manbhoom on the fields below the embankments. On ground kept moist by the percolation of water from the reservoir ("bund," as it is called locally), after the removal of the rice crop, snipe will be found in abundance, of the common and pintail varieties only, it being too open for the Jack and painted; and the walking over the terraced fields is less fatiguing than knee deep

through wet grass and weeds round a marsh. As duck and teal also abound on those "bunds" in Manbhoom, a mixed bag can be always secured by first shooting the water before taking the snipe grounds below the embankments. In the best parts of Manbhoom for this description of sport I have bagged thirty to fifty brace of birds—teal, pochards, gadwals, and snipe, with perhaps a few grey partridges and a hare or two, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. in January or February, walking or riding from "bund" to "bund" and shooting leisurely at each, according to the humour of the moment.

For snipe-shooting alone I know of no better place than Calcutta itself for a man really fond of this sport, and willing to range twenty to forty miles up the railway lines on either side of the Hooghly river; September and October being, I think, the two best months.

Wild fowl-shooting may be obtained in the months of December, January and February at its best, and in March in its decline, just prior to the migration of the birds to the North. The choicest districts are Furreedpoor, Jepore, Pubna Moorshedabad, Rajshye, Maldah, Purneah, and Pooree; and early in the season the sea-coast of Balasore, from the mouth of the Damra river northwards; but nowhere can this sport be enjoyed in such perfection—vast numbers combined with endless varieties and species—as in the great salt-water lake of Pooree, called the "Chilka."





CHAPTER IV.

Wild Hog and Hog-hunting—Character and Nature of the Bengal Boar—Hog-hunting and Fox-hunting compared—Reminiscences of the Old Tent Club—Accidents excessive on account of Jealous Riding—Sumptuous Entertainments—A successful Meet near Tumlook—Eighty Boars in Six Days—A contented Spirit—Christmas Meets—Large Parties objectionable in many respects—Some old Horses—Riding down a Hog-deer—Description of Old and Modern Spears—Modes of using Spears—Comparison of Boars of different Localities—Size and Colour of Wild Hogs—Their Craftiness—A very gallant Pig—European and Indian Pig compared.

WHAT the knight of old was among ordinary men, the wild boar is among the beasts of the field. The buffalo may be as courageous, but he is not as gallant and chivalrous as the boar, which of all animals is the most consistently brave under all circumstances. As fierce under provocation as the tiger and the panther, he is neither as cruel nor as bloodthirsty; with him as a rule, a cut and thrust follow a supposed insult or injury, and then he passes on without any desire to pursue the quarrel to the bitter end; ever ready to draw the sword on challenge or provocation given, the combat over, he does not make it the cause of a lasting vendetta; nor as the victor does he hack and mangle his vanquished enemy. This description may be thought somewhat poetical, but the writer, from a long experience of the gallant beast, both as the conqueror and the conquered in many a hard fought single combat, believes it to be true in the main.

The wild hog is the commonest of all wild animals of the first class in Bengal, and even at this day is plentiful in many places, and affords the best sport in the world, where the

country is good for riding. Some who have tasted the pleasures of both, may give the preference to fox-hunting, but probably the majority will award the first place to hog-hunting on the grass-covered plains and river "churs" of Bengal, if they have enjoyed that glorious sport under its "best conditions."

Wanting in the gay show and the brilliant adjuncts of a grand meet in a first class fox-hunting county, "pig-sticking" must have its claim to superiority as a manly sport, in the fact of its being a well matched contest between an armed and mounted man, and a brave, fleet, powerful and savage beast. Unlike the *mise en scène* of a hunting-field in England, Indian hog-hunting offers little to dazzle the eye or excite the imagination. In place of scores of scarlet-coated men on splendid steeds, surrounded by numbers of handsome equipages, and all the accompaniments of wealth and luxury, the hog-hunting meet is a poor exhibition indeed. Three or four hunters armed with spears, and dressed in sombre, and not rarely, unbecoming style, appear at the jungle side, upon Arab, Australian, or country-bred horses, which would hardly pass muster on the English hunting-field; the accoutrements are plain, and often not as clean and smart as they should be, but nevertheless, are business-like and effective; hounds and their attendants are altogether absent, but instead there may be a dozen elephants or a few score of almost nude beaters to drive the coverts, and the *tout ensemble* is by no means imposing on ordinary occasions; but when a fine boar with flashing tusks, and a bristling crest breaks cover to strive for victory with a solitary hunter over a rough and grass-covered plain, the contest which follows is worthy of manhood.

Hog-hunting with the Calcutta Tent Club five-and-twenty years ago was a princely sport. The Club consisted of twelve members, residents of that city of—well, palaces; men who used to take out with them from three to five or six horses, the best hunters to be got for money. The camp equipage, the cuisine, and the wines were always of the best, and the

line of elephants made a goodly show. Very rarely did the entire Club turn out, but as guests were permitted to be invited in moderate numbers, the field was almost always numerous, and the prevailing good fellowship simply charming.

It was the custom of the Club for the President, when the cloth was drawn in the old fashion, to record the sport of the day, taking count of the first spears from the members and their friends from left to right, while cheroots and hookahs were lighted. This practice gave the first spear a prominence and honour in the Club, hardly conceded to it in the Mofussil; and as a natural consequence it was jealously contested and caused more accidents than was usual elsewhere in those times. I have known as many as ten or a dozen valuable horses permanently or temporarily disabled during a meet lasting three days, when for as many boars accounted for at a Mofussil meet, perhaps three or four only might be more or less injured. To take a forward place therefore in the Tent Club, it was essential that a man should be a good and bold rider, a knowing hand, and well mounted.

As a rule, first spears fell either to light weights, who rode well and with judgment, or to heavier weights on first-class horses piloted with knowledge and experience. At a great and most successful meet, when forty-four stout old boars were speared in three days, the highest record of first spears fell to one who was but an indifferent horseman, that is, he was a loose and an ungainly one, but he was mounted on fairly good and thoroughly staunch horses, guided with great experience of the sport. A light weight, mounted on a staunch and active horse under fifteen hands, will, I think, take more first spears than a heavy weight on larger and more expensive horses, other conditions being equal.

The ordinary practice of the Club was to mount after breakfast, about ten o'clock, and to lunch about two by the covert side, and after an hour's rest and refreshment to resume sport till sunset. These tiffins *al fresco* were spread in good style with every delicacy in the way of food and

drink obtainable in Calcutta, and were unsurpassed, except by the dinners which followed at eight in the evening, served with much form and ceremony by a staff of excellent servants in the fine large mess-tent. Ordinarily the majority of the members retired to their own private tents between ten and eleven, leaving three or four late sitters to discuss grilled bones and an extra glass till midnight, by which hour the camp was perfectly still, except for the neighing or the stamping of a horse, or the howling of packs of jackals, attracted by the scent of good provender.

I am unable to state when this Club was first started, but it must have been, at least, so far back as 1830, and probably a Club of this kind has existed since the third quarter of the last century in some form or other; it flourished till 1863, or thereabouts, and then was broken up, to be succeeded by another on a somewhat different footing.

During the period that I was a member of the old Club, an honorary one as a resident of the Mofussil—and if I recollect rightly, the only one not an ordinary and resident member—it consisted of six merchants, two barristers, three covenanted and uncovenanted civil servants, and a naval officer. The President, when I joined the Club, was the late James Patton, a Judge of the Chief Civil and Criminal Court of Bengal, a dashing and accomplished horseman, and a most agreeable companion, who was succeeded by one as worthy, the late William Fergusson, a Calcutta merchant, a very popular and respected President, and the last.

The most successful party I ever attended was when a detachment of four members of the Club came down to my country near Tumlook, to be shown the sport it could boast, and being received by my then assistant, Mr. S., and myself, we six slew thirty-six boars the first three days, and afterwards, reinforced by half-a-dozen more members who had heard of our success, forty-four more were added to the list in the same number of days, or eighty in six full days' hunting; and, be it understood, good sized boars too; not a half-grown grunter being among them. In consequence of

the great number of riders during the last three days, and the keen contest for spears, the casualties were excessive, our President, among others, having one horse severely injured, and a second killed, representing a loss of two horses hard to be replaced for four thousand rupees. There were besides ten or a dozen more or less cut up, and lastly, the spills were unusually numerous through hard riding over broken ground, happily without serious injury.

We had among us in those days one of the best of fellows and worst of riders in Bengal; a man extremely fond of horses and sport, hog-hunting in particular, who never missed a meet of the Tent Club if he could help it, and who used to take the field with four or five as fine horses as any out, riding them solely by trust in Providence and a tight clutch of the pommel of his saddle, turning up miraculously just before the hunted boar gave up the ghost. Although he rarely obtained a good spear, his quiet enjoyment of the sport was intense, and his complete satisfaction with himself and all the world at the end of a successful run, achieved without a fall, was delightful to behold.

The country hunted by the Tent Club was mainly that between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour, with an occasional visit to more distant localities. Bakra, on the Diamond Harbour road, was a favourite meet, but in my time it was a poor one; hogs were by no means plentiful there, and the riding was cramped, as much of it was over mulberry-fields and through villages. I have known a long day's hunting to result in the spearing of a couple of boars only, and the fruitless chase of perhaps double that number, which ultimately made good their escape among the thick bamboo and cane jungles around the villages. On the whole, the sport enjoyed by the Club over their own particular country appeared to a Mofussilite like myself very indifferent, and the eagerness and competition for first blood a little overstrained and unwarrantable.

The Christmas meet was generally attended by nearly all the members, and by many guests brought by them. On

these occasions the camp of the Club was quite imposing, with the great mess-tent and kitchens in the centre, a dozen private tents grouped around, and nearly a hundred horses picketed behind them ; while a score or more elephants stood in the adjacent groves. At such meets, too, there was high feasting ; and the by no means Arctic cold of a Bengal winter sufficed as an excuse for hot punch, over which good songs and stories went the round till midnight, or even to the small hours.

The lapse of less than a quarter of a century leaves me stranded as the sole surviving member of the old Club, with vivid memories of the happy and merry times spent among the best of good fellows and sportsmen ; thankful that the relish for sport remains as keen as ever, although all those with whom it was shared have passed on to the happy hunting-grounds, or have left the country long ago. With the unceasing progress and perpetual changes going on around us, together with the strong drams of excitements and exaggerations provided by the Press to meet the cravings of a somewhat hysterical public, we are told that we must be happier than those who lived in simpler and ruder times, when blunted senses were satisfied with plain fare, mental and moral, and less sensitive natures were content with bloody wars and wholesale catastrophes at rare intervals. Those who tell us that we are happier for the superior blessings we now enjoy ought to know best ; and therefore we are and must be happier, since they cannot possibly be mistaken. But I doubt it ; for all the changes have not been improvements, and some, at least, have been very much the other way ; this, however, is only a matter of opinion and personal feeling.

For sport alone, I always thought a small party of two or three spears preferable to a much larger number, and have, when quite alone, enjoyed hog-hunting more than with a crowd ; obtaining longer runs, ending with more desperate fights, when the boar had but one adversary to contend against. On the other hand, I have felt the want of a companion

with whom to fight the battles o'er again, and my aching arms, after killing four, five, or six boars in the morning, off hard-pulling Arabs, used to raise regrets at the absence of at least one old comrade.

I had once an Arab, a trifle under fourteen hands, who always insisted upon his own way of running down his pig, and who (I will not write of him as "which," for he was as intelligent as a native B.A.), used to course it as a greyhound does a hare, turning, twisting, and wheeling round after delivery of a thrust, as if all he asked was that his rider should handle his spear properly while he did the hunting. Mounted on this little self-willed and hard-mouthed hero, when a fleet and jinking boar was before us, and the country was rough, or much intersected by blind ditches and water-courses, my arms used to become numb, and all the breath pumped out of my body before the final spear was delivered; and then, as I sprung off his back to loosen the girths, he would look up at me, after a sniff or two at our prostrate foe, as much as to say, "Did I not do that handsomely?"

Another, and a far more trying horse, was a well-bred Tasmanian, with a mouth as sensitive as the conscience of an Accountant-General, whose notion of hunting was to go straight forward, nose up in the air, and the bit between his teeth, as regardless of the animal hunted as of the trees and bushes he passed. That grievous charger brought me to terrible grief more than once when hunting alone, and might have been warranted safely to break any square, unless shot down (as his stupidity and obstinacy fully deserved). A casual acquaintance, who took a fancy for him, relieved me of his company, to my great satisfaction, for he was too valuable in many respects to be parted with at the cost of a charge of shot. I forget now how many heads, arms, and legs he broke before and after he adorned my stud; but they were not a few, and he did his best to throw mine also into the list; the blundering, hard-mouthed beast!

Still there were two other horses calling me master which

I hated more, and justly. One was an iron-grey country-bred stallion, about fourteen-three, a tough, sound, and good-looking animal, whose little game was first to rear up as straight and upright as the Ochterlony monument on being mounted, and afterwards during a morning or evening ride to slip backward into the first deep ditch or cutting we met with bad enough to suit his views. Oh, how I loathed that brute. Many a time have I slipped off as he reared upright, and brought him suddenly on his back by a smart touch of the bit, but to no good purpose, for he was not open to conviction. The only good service this gallant courser ever did me was to get me the first spear off a hog-deer stag, after a hard and long run through grass as high as his stifle; but how we achieved it was never clear, unless indeed we forgot each other during the chase. He too was fancied for his good looks and strong sound legs, by a stranger who took himself in, and I parted from him willingly at a sacrifice.

The third horse referred to above was a grey Australian gelding of over sixteen hands, and without a single good point. He might have done good service to a house-builder for scaffolding, but was of no use whatever as a pig-sticker, although bought for me by a friend as a choice hunter, because, forsooth, he had won a hurdle race and could jump a church; however that may be, he was worthless for the purpose for which he was wanted, and while a wonderful high jumper, his good points were all catalogued in that one accomplishment; for the rest he was a washy, long-legged, ugly beast, without heart, speed, or constitution; a horse that I should myself have bought, after a personal introduction, as willingly as I would a three-legged camelopard. I forget what was his end, but think it was worthy of his life and character. He was what is called now by dealers, "a grand up-standing horse," and was addicted to getting his legs mixed up, and then tumbling down upon his stupid head, whenever he got upon broken ground and a close-cramped country. He ought to have been stuffed and set up as a model of a horse on no account to be bought for any purpose more useful than

jumping in and out of sheep-pens. I think he must have had a strain of the kangaroo in his blood.

Old prints and books represent the spear used by hog-hunters to have been a strong male-bamboo shaft about six feet in length, tipped with a steel head, which was thrown at the boar at close quarters—a javelin in short, a weapon far less efficient than the lance which succeeded it, whether the long one in use at the present day in Madras and Bombay, or the short one carried in Bengal. I believe the former is about eight feet long, while the latter is only six to six and a half feet, according to the fancy of the hunter and the height of his horse, the longer being, of course, required when the latter runs from fifteen to sixteen hands, and the shorter for those under and for gallowsays.

The superiority of the long thrusting or the short jobbing spear has been a question often debated, but it may be fairly allowed that whichever is used is the best that experience has proved in that particular country in which it has the preference. On comparatively open ground the longer may be the better, but it most certainly is not where grass and reeds have to be ridden through as in many parts of Bengal. I have tried both, and give the precedence to the short one, and personally give the preference to one measuring from six to six and a quarter feet in length, according to the height of the horse ridden.

The javelin or throwing-spear, unweighted with lead at the butt, appears to have been in general use in this Presidency down to 1836, when a party of sportsmen, called together by the late Mr. Mills, of the Civil Service, after a full discussion of the merits of each kind, adopted that in use at the present day, and disallowed the casting or throwing of it under a penalty, and very properly, for that practice was and is a most dangerous one to horses and riders alike; some of the most serious accidents attending this fine sport have been caused by it from time to time. Men, and those most frequently young hands, in the excitement of the moment, have broken this wise rule on perceiving the hog

about to dash into some thick grass or reeds, or jinking across or away from them when almost within jobbing distance. The young sportsman therefore cannot be too earnestly cautioned against this most objectionable practice.

Another action to be avoided is that of raising the arm high in delivering the downward thrust, as by so doing many a stroke misses its object, and many a horse is cut about the stifle by the boar charging home at full speed. It should be remembered that the momentum of a horse at a gallop, meeting a boar rushing on at its best pace is sufficient to drive a keen spear through the latter, without any extraordinary muscular exertion on the part of the horseman, whose proper course is to direct the point of his weapon to the right place, his spear hand held low, the shock of the encounter supplying the necessary force. As an example of what this force is, the following incident may give some idea :—

De L. and I, finishing a morning's sport with a fine active boar of thirty-five inches, had a rather long run, and I being a light weight and my companion a heavy one, my horse had outpaced his, and was leading a full hundred yards, when the boar, finding himself beaten in the race, changed his tactics, and turning rapidly, charged at me with long bounds, aiming straight at my knee, and received the point of the spear between his neck and shoulder, forcing it out of my hand ; he spun round once or twice and then fell dead on his side. The spear had passed through the entire length of his body, and its point had come out an inch or two below his tail ; all that I did was to make a well directed thrust at a soft place without exerting any great force, as the hog leapt upon me in his last bound. So, too, in passing a running boar, a thrust with the half-arm behind the shoulder will drive the point of the spear clean through the ribs from side to side.

The hog-hunter should look to his spears carefully, and take good care that the bamboo shaft is thoroughly sound, and the head bright and sharp, both edge and point. There is a small insect, which boring into the bamboo, renders it unsound and liable to snap ; and in this way many accidents occur to

the horse or rider. Briefly, in this sport it is the duty of the hunter to see that all his horse-gear, straps, girths, and buckles, as well as his weapons, are thoroughly sound, more particularly when hunting alone.

I am inclined to believe that in this Presidency there are two varieties of wild hog, and a third in the hills, having remarked certain points in which the two of the plains are dissimilar, and both these unlike those of the highlands. For instance, the boars of Noakholly, Pubna, Tipperah and the "churs" of the Megna and the Brahmaputra are taller, fleetier, and more savage in appearance than those of the Western districts; their skulls also are larger in proportion to their bulk, and foreheads more rounded. I think their tusks, too, are longer and stronger; both these varieties are proportionately higher than that of the hills and deep woods, and are more fearless of man.

I have read and heard of boars which stood forty inches high at the shoulders, but have never measured any myself which exceeded thirty-eight fairly measured between two spears held upright at the crest and heel; and I can speak from considerable experience, having accounted for more than nine hundred, single-handed or in company, besides those shot when riding was impracticable. It may be that others said to be higher have been measured in a different way, possibly from crest to toe, which might account for the two inches of difference. As a general rule, a boar standing thirty-four to thirty-six inches from crest to heel is a very large one; and those which give the finest runs and the hardest fights are an inch or two less, as lighter, more active, and possessing sharper though more slender tusks. The pigs in the Tumlook country ran rather low, thirty-six inches being the maximum recorded in my notes, while the majority of the largest were even smaller; they were a short-legged race, very heavily built, but at the same time carried smaller heads with flatter foreheads than those of Eastern Bengal, and being thus formed did not, of course, afford as long runs as the others; they were equally courageous in combat, but not so fierce and savage in their anger.

Occasionally, a brown boar may be met with ; and, about as rarely, one entirely covered with long bristles, a couple of inches in length, upon the body, and longer on the crest ; but the ordinary colour is a dark slate, almost black, with blue-black bristles on the head, crest, and tip of tail. More rarely still, a boar may be found with a hide upon his shoulders like the shields of the rhinoceros.

The wild pig's tail is never curly, at least on this side of India, and is longer and finer than that depicted in pictures of the German and European wild variety. The Indian animal, too, is a better bred and a more active one than its European and African congener.

The Bengal boar is not only one of the most valiant among the beasts of the field, but the most clever and calculating ; he rarely condescends to low, crafty dodges in self-defence or in attack, like the tiger and the panther, or as even the wild buffalo does sometimes ; but there are times and seasons when he becomes extremely irascible, and prone to maim or kill all who approach him, biped or quadruped, with or without provocation.

On a certain occasion, a party being out at Dilouree, in Pubna, was attacked by a boar without any apparent cause. At the back of the indigo factory was a little river, the muddy bed of which could not be crossed on account of quagmires, except by certain fords at which cattle were accustomed to pass backwards and forwards, and which had been marked off by flags by our host, Mr. L. We had killed a hog, and were walking our horses leisurely through some fields of thatching grass, a foot or two high, close to the river bank, when we espied on the opposite side an immense boar trotting along with tail and bristles erect, and evidently in a very bad humour. After inspecting us for a few moments our sulky friend descended the river bank, and skirting it till he gained a ford, crossed over to our side ; then re-ascending the steep slope, he crossed the grass, and went out into the open to a mustard-field, and turning to bay awaited our approach.

Seeing the temper and attitude of our foe, we arranged our

plan of action to meet the requirements of the occasion, and slew him without injury to our horses, by charging one by one in succession, the boar receiving us halfway without any attempt at escape, and dying without a groan, fighting to the very last. This gallant beast measured thirty-six inches at the shoulder, and was the finest and handsomest killed in that country for a long time, and his skeleton was set up in the museum at the corner of Park Street, and may still be seen in the new building, for aught I know to the contrary.

Mention has been made of two boars measuring thirty-eight inches as the largest seen by me in any district. These two were killed by E. L., of the Civil Service, and myself, in Mymensingh, on the "churs" of the old Brahmaputra, opposite the Bygonbaree House, and within a couple or three miles of each other, and they might have been twin brothers for size, beauty, and character. They were quite black, of immense bulk as well as extraordinary height, excessively fat, and, I am sorry to add, altogether wanting in the pluck of their kind, both falling under our spears without desperate resistance, even essaying to avoid the encounter by every art, and finally dying with deep and long-drawn groans. The fact is, they were too lusty and heavy either to race or to fight, and knew it full well. It may be here stated that boars rarely utter a groan when dying, seeming to despise any exhibition of weakness; also they often dispose of their bodies at the last moments in becoming and dignified posture, imitating in this respect the Piercie Shaftons and Sir John Chesters of the biped world. Although one may never tire of this grand sport, one never can witness such deaths without feeling some regrets, for even to the callous they suggest painful thoughts and reflections.

Never having seen the wild boar of Europe, I am not in a position to judge whether that animal has been correctly represented in the hunting pictures of artists, ancient and modern; but this I can say, without fear of contradiction on the part of experienced Indian sportsmen, that the boars represented on the canvas of painters are very unlike those of

India; the latter are taller, more actively bright, and, in fact, far handsomer in form, and more thoroughbred in general appearance. Again, the heads of the Indian variety are less rugged and grisly, and their legs and "trotters" finer and more shapely. Lastly, the curly or twisted tails adopted by artists as the appendages of the European boars are never seen in India, where we have only the straight, tapering pattern ending in a tuft of bristles. I may add, also, that I have very rarely seen the tusks correctly drawn; those of the upper jaw, on which the long cutting teeth of the lower are sharpened and kept in serviceable condition, appear to be the stumbling-block in particular on which artists break their shins. I should, by a comparison of the forms of the European boars, as depicted on canvas, with those seen by me, judge the latter to be the more formidable animals by reason of their superior height, fleetness, and activity, the two varieties bearing the same relation to each other as do the Suffolk punches and thoroughbred hunters of England.





CHAPTER V.

Wild Hog and Hog-hunting—Hogs sabred on Horse-back—Mode of Hunting adopted by Native “Shikarees”—Running down and Spearing Boars on Foot—Famous Hog-hunting Grounds—Good Sport and a bad Accident—Cuts and Wounds inflicted by Boars—A strange Incident and a severe Wound—A narrow Escape and a Hand-to-hand Encounter—Relative Qualifications of various Breeds of Horses for “Pig-sticking”—A Misadventure—Wild Hogs as Comic Characters—Mr. Billoo’s Adventure.

I HAVE read of boars being sabred, but have never seen it done, or attempted it myself, though I can well believe that running hogs may be cut down by expert swordsmen, armed with heavy and keen blades. Against a charging hog of considerable size, I consider that a mounted swordsman would fare ill, and would have his horse badly cut, almost to a certainty. A point, delivered truly, would, no doubt, kill the charging beast, but would hardly stop him in his rush, and he would most probably get home on horse or rider.

When pigs through experience refuse to break, and prefer to dash through the line of elephants or beaters, a charge of snipe shot put in behind will often be found efficacious. Finding themselves exposed to such painful attacks, they will face the plain, and endeavour to gain another covert rather than court a repetition of the argument *a tergo*.

I have often seen wild hog run down by “Shikarees” on foot, assisted by their dogs, the common village, country cur, but trained to the sport. Men and dogs, equally active and sinewy, effect their purpose by perseverance, and not by speed. A boar or sow, found in the bushes or canes round a village or some old pond, will be first baited by the dogs, and

worried out of covert, when one or more men may take a shot at it, and failing to bring it down, away they go over the plain to the next village or bit of jungle, Mister Pig leading far ahead, Messieurs the Curs, six or eight in number, following at a respectful interval behind, and by no means overtaking their strength by their speed, and lastly, half a dozen "Shikarees," armed with old flint fowling-pieces and heavily-tipped spears, bringing up the rear in a lobbing kind of run, at which they will cover miles without being blown. Some shelter gained, the hunted beast will then come to bay again, and again worried and baited, will break out and make for another covert, chased as before, curs and men now rather closer in the rear; and this game will be repeated two or three times, the fat pig usually showing signs of fatigue after a run of three or four miles, and as many fights with its persecutors, who are as fresh as when they started, and barring a cut or two, none the worse for their exertions. A last run of a mile or two more and the exhausted pig makes his last stand with stern to some bush, bank, or tree, bristles erect, mouth open and champing, now and again charging upon the curs, and upsetting one or more, while the rest close round, biting his hams and hocks, till the men coming up bury their broad-bladed spears into his ribs, and finally overcome him by the pertinacity of their pursuit and attacks.

I have known but one instance of Europeans following this kind of sport, which the heat of the climate and the want of training combine to render unsuitable to them in Bengal. My friend W. J. L. and I, having often observed our "Shikarees" and their dogs, who used to drive out boars for us, run down a fat sow for themselves in the manner above described, resolved upon making the attempt ourselves, encouraged to do so by the fact that in jumping and running we could always beat our native companions when we matched ourselves against them in races.

Accordingly, one fine February morning, after breakfast, when the cool north breeze tempered the heat of the sun, we sallied out, spear in hand, with our "Shikarees" and their

dogs, on "chur" Hingotea in Noakholly. A fair-sized boar being soon found in the bushes near the village of that name, was after the usual worrying and preliminary trotting backwards and forwards forced to break and make off due south, across the open plain, towards the tamarisk jungle, a couple of miles away. Clearing, as best we could, two or three small tidal creeks or "nullahs," we ran our quarry into that covert, being ourselves well ahead of the natives, but some little distance behind the pig and the dogs. After a little coursing in the lighter jungle, in which the boar turned to bay once or twice, he ran into the heavier, and took up his post to fight it out in the usual way. L. being the heavier man, had fallen about a hundred yards behind me, when I came up to the boar, surrounded by the dogs, which were baying and snapping at him, and delivered my spear fairly into the ribs, whereupon he made at me, but, held off by my weapon, and hampered by the dogs, his attacks were avoided, and then L. arriving dead-beat, plunged his spear into him, reducing him to a helpless condition before the "Shikarees" came up. It was not bad sport, but we found it too exhausting, and stuck in future to our saddles.

The run from end to end may have been three miles, and the natives were completely outpaced, though it is quite possible that they hung back towards the close, wishing to see whether we should last and finish. There was one creature, black, long, and thin, with arms and legs as fleshless and devoid of muscle as a walking-stick, who carrying a huge spear eight or nine feet in length, came up smiling and as unblown as if he had only leisurely walked the distance, whom I could but envy; the rest, by no means exhausted by the run, arrived one after another rather more blown, but fit to go another mile or two. Here is a sport for Mofussilite tennis-playing youths of the present day, who keeping no hunters might show what can be done on foot by lovers of sport.

"Daoodkhandee" in Tipperah was famous for its jumping boars, which were in fact the long-legged breed, common on

the "churs" of the Megna, but these have, I understand, disappeared from that locality long ago, and have given place to the heavy animals found in patches of jungle about villages, the country being quite changed, and the long stretches of grass "chur" land brought under cultivation.

In times past there was no finer place for this sport than "Sidhu" and "Boodhoo" in Noakholly; and before these, "Chur Hazaru" in the same district, where I have heard of G. G. and G. P. T., both of the Civil Service, killing a dozen boars in the course of the day; and have also heard that these two fine horsemen could never hit it off pleasantly when hunting together, and therefore each went his own way with different boars, killing them handsomely, without difference of opinion or loss of temper as to what the other ought or ought not to have done, or left undone. They rest in peace this many a long year; and let us trust that in the happier hunting-grounds they agree better than they did when in the flesh.

Recording nothing of which I have not been an eye-witness, I ask forgiveness for what may be regarded as egotism; but I will run that risk rather than describe sport that I cannot vouch for myself.

I went to Sidhu once a little before Christmas, taking with me three horses, an Australian and two Arabs, with the full intention of slaying three boars off each, on the same day before taking my mid-day breakfast; but alas! as generally will befall the best laid plans of mice and men, my own on that occasion went "agee;" very much so indeed.

It so came about that I was the only hunting-man then in the district; I was therefore quite alone on that trip. The rice had been harvested, and the fields, covered with a thick stubble a foot high, were still soft without being muddy, a very favourable condition for unshod horses, shoes never being put on by us in that district in those days. The small patches of grass and tamarisk were yet green and undisturbed by cattle; the pigs were as usual there, as plentiful as any hog-hunter

could desire ; and lastly, the weather was delightfully cool and invigorating.

My camp was pitched in the very midst of the best ground, and my beaters were a few native "Shikarees" and their dogs, all that was needed in that country ; and luckily it was so, for it would have been beyond my power to get elephants across the wide tideway dividing Sidhu from the mainland. Having taken a very early breakfast, I mounted about eight o'clock my grey Arab, and without anything occurring worthy of note, killed the first three boars in the space of an hour, hardly disposing of one before another was afoot and showing in the open stubble fields, or in fine green grass dotted over here and there with small light coverts, in which the hogs rested during the mid-day heat.

My second mount that morning was a brown Arab, a gallo way a trifle under fourteen hands, as active as a monkey, and as brave as a lion, quite up to twelve stone, and therefore, he carried me, at only ten stone five pounds riding weight, with ease ; as gallant a little horse as was ever foaled, but not quite sound in his legs, which had been overtaken by a former owner too heavy for him. I killed a good boar off, and then out of a little bit of swampy grass and wild cardamom, drove three very large hog which made off at speed towards some tamarisk covert a couple of miles off, across a beautifully level plain, unbroken by tidal creek or bushes. At first the pigs gained a little upon my horse, keeping well together, and all three bent upon making the tamarisks ahead, where they hoped to throw us off. After a mile however, we got close together, and then selecting the largest of the party, I gave him a spear in the small ribs, and believing him my own, I followed the next in size, which after a sharp burst of half a mile, I overhauled and discovered to be a huge old sow ; leaving her therefore, I went at the utmost speed of my little horse after the third, now nearing his goal, and overtaking him, caused him to slacken his pace, and come down at me like a steam engine, to receive a spear between the shoulders, and then as my horse wheeled round

a second through the ribs, as he again rushed upon me, and tore the spear from my grasp as I passed on, unable to draw it out of the deep wound. The last thrust was a fatal one, and he succumbed at once; and thus was slain the fifth boar of that morning, one of those active blue-black animals, measuring thirty-six inches in height, equally good at running or fighting, armed too with long sharp tusks, white as ivory and as sharp as a knife, point and edges alike.

Dismounting, I loosed the girths for a moment or two, and throwing the reins over the Arab's head on the ground to let him know he was to stand still, as he understood full well, I proceeded to withdraw my spear and inspect my fallen foe; meanwhile the old sow passed us at no great distance and gained the covert all three had made for together.

A minute or two afterwards I re-mounted and returned at a canter towards the beaters, who had followed me at a run, and from them I learned that the first and largest of the boars had lagged behind, where he had been wounded, as if unable to go further. It was not long before I met him as he slowly moved about as if undecided in his mind whether to go on or return on his tracks; but as soon as I approached at a hand gallop he proved that the wound received had not disabled him or lessened his powers, for he rushed upon me at a terrific pace, bounding and grunting in great fury. We met with a crash; my spear struck full on the tough hide of his shoulder, and penetrating eight or nine inches, snapped in two like a rotten reed, and in an instant my right leg was thrown back upon the horse's quarters, and I was nearly hurled to the ground. The little Arab, an experienced hog-hunter, immediately after the delivery of the spear, wheeled rapidly to the left, and my weight thus falling on the near stirrup, enabled me with great difficulty to avoid a bad fall, and presently to recover my seat in the saddle. Had I fallen before the wounded and infuriated boar my life would have been forfeited, and my hunting ended for ever. The horse completed the circle and was ready again to continue the fight, but neither his rider nor the pig were so, although the latter main-

tained his defiant attitude, and prepared to attack again. On being reseated upright in the saddle, I felt for and missed my right stirrup, and also experienced the sensation of a severe rap on the right leg below the knee. Looking down, therefore, I found the stirrup-iron and the lower half of the leathers gone, and blood flowing out of a long rip in my boot. Further on, dismounting, to make a closer inspection, I saw that the Arab had a long cut from the right front of his chest, up along his shoulder, from which he bled freely; the stirrup leathers had been divided as if by machinery, so clean had been the cut; and, lastly, there was a deep wound inside the calf of my right leg through the stout hunting-boot. It was satisfactory, under such circumstances, to perceive that my gallant foe was as incapable of resuming the combat as I was myself, but as for the Arab he was ready enough to fight. The "Shikarees" having come up I re-mounted and rode slowly to camp, while they retrieved the boar and brought him in, he having gone a short distance only and laid down to die.

This boar measured thirty-seven inches, had very stout and long tusks, and the toughest hide on his shoulders that I ever saw, thick hairless shields like those of the rhinoceros. Although old, he had lost none of his strength, and only a part of his activity and speed. For myself, I received a deep wound through the muscles of the calf into the shin-bone of the leg, and was laid up by it for two months, losing some two or three scores of boars which otherwise would have graced the list for January and February. My horse's wound healed rapidly under proper treatment, and he was fit for work long before his master. I believe that all the mischief was done by one cut of the left tusk, scoring first the horse's shoulder, then severing the stirrup leathers, and finally wounding me through the boot.

While on the subject of cuts and wounds, I will recall the circumstances attending a very severe wound inflicted on a horse in some manner not made quite clear to this day.

H. B. S. and I were out hunting in Souraburea one May, just after a heavy fall of rain succeeding a month or two of excessive heat had cooled the air. We had splendid sport, notwithstanding the heavy state of the country, and the pools of rain water which lay deep on the lowest grounds. One afternoon, shortly before sunset, we started out of the "jheel" a brace of pigs, resembling each other so closely in size, colour, and make, that they might well be twins of the same litter.

After going together for a few hundred yards, the two boars (thirty-four inches in height) separated and took different lines, S. following one and I the other, and I saw nothing more of him till after I had killed my pig and was examining on foot a slight gash on my horse's stifle, inflicted by the boar in his last spring at us, when he received the spear through his crest and lungs. My examination ended I remounted, and just as I did so, saw at the distance of a quarter of a mile, on my right, my comrade and his pig rushing upon each other from opposite directions at full speed. The next thing I saw was the boar fallen dead after a turn or two, and S. dismounted inspecting his horse's side. Riding up I found S.'s mare bleeding from flesh wounds under the skin and muscles of the right shoulder and back ribs, which we staunched as well as we were able to do with wetted "pugrees" and "kummerbunds." S.'s account of the adventure was as follows: After we separated, his hog took him at a great pace for about a mile, and then "jinking" once across him, got behind and followed with long bounds, endeavouring to reach his mare's hams and hocks; but outpacing him, S. wheeled round, and the two met in almost a direct line (a most objectionable course) at racing speed; his spear struck true, but was dashed from his grasp as they flew past each other, and he felt that something had gone wrong. Taking a pull on his mare, and looking over his shoulder, he perceived the boar lying dead, and dismounted to inspect damages, which, as before recounted, were serious. The spear lay on the ground a little beyond the spot where the collision

occurred, and S.'s right boot was cut through, but his leg escaped without a scratch.

A little consideration led us to the conclusion (right or wrong, I will not warrant) that the boar, which, struck on the spine, was instantaneously slain, had in passing the mare dashed the spear forward and horizontally in the air, point towards her, and she, by the speed and force of her action, had received the point into the muscles of her shoulders and ribs. S.'s boot, in the intervening space between the two wounds, being cut through below the swell of the calf.

The accident was altogether a strange one, but no serious consequences ensued, for the mare, left in my care and treated with frequent applications of iced water, and poultices of cold milk curds, recovered completely in three weeks, and was ridden again, as sound as ever, before the season closed.

The result of another accident not far from the same place was more serious. Hunting alone one morning, and having killed two or three fine boars, I roused a still finer one, which led me a good long chase over rough ground much intersected by water-courses, cleared handsomely by both boar and Arab (my old favourite grey), till the former, being run into, made a desperate charge, in receiving which the bamboo shaft of the spear broke a foot or two from the blade, left buried deep in the shoulders of the boar, which then got home and cut a deep gash in the horse's stifle, and as the sequel proved, dislocated the round bone joint also, bringing us down with a crash. Left now standing astride my gallant horse with the leaded butt and four or five feet of the shaft in my hand, I received the boar's next attack with a blow upon his head with the weighted end, and somewhat staggered him. He then retreated a few yards on my right rear to obtain a run and momentum, and again dashing upon us at full speed was again stopped in the same fashion. Shaking his grisly head the boar once more retired backwards as before, facing me all the time, and for a second or two appeared to be considering how best to take me at a disadvantage; then he advanced as before, to be repulsed in the same way, these onslaughts

being repeated several times, till my right arm became somewhat tired, and I began to think that matters might go hard with me. Meanwhile, the horse lay perfectly still as I stood astride him on the ground, and once only did he get a flesh wound in the rump when the boar got in closer than usual.

I had that morning carried on my belt a Colt's revolver, a most unusual thing for me to do, even when hunting alone; but now on hastily feeling for it, it was not to be found, having fallen in one of the jumps over water as was afterwards discovered. I had also taken out that day (another most unusual practice) two or three terriers, and one of them, let me record his name in gratitude—"Quiz," out-pacing the others, now came up and at once attacked the boar, keeping, however, well out of his way, he being himself only a little fellow, but he most effectually took off the boar's attention from me and my disabled steed, and presently, joined by his little companions, so badgered and worried him, that I was able to drag my Arab up on his legs and pull him away some distance. The terriers were then called off and the pig retreated, seemingly having had quite enough of us, and I saw him no more; but he must have died of his wound, since the head of my spear was found near the scene of our encounter, and brought to me a month afterwards. My beautiful Arab was injured for life, and became a pensioner, after having carried me for four years as I was never carried before or since.

I am now reminded of a subject frequently discussed among Indian sportsmen, viz., which among the different breeds of horses is the most "staunch" at pig-sticking, as the noble sport is familiarly styled. Writing solely from my own experience, I give the first place to English, Australian, and Cape horses; next after them to Cabulees, Kattiwars, and country-breds; and last of all I place the Arabs. Of Persians and Turkomans I have less knowledge as hunters; the latter are, I take it, mostly Cabulees, Khandaharees, Punjabees, and various country-breds, a few being real "Toorkees" or

Turkomans; but so far as I am acquainted with them, both appear pretty "staunch," and the latter more so than the Persian.

Now as far as ordinary pluck is concerned, none equal the true pure-bred Arab (I do not allude to all the animals wrongly called by that name in the present day); and I presume that it is his bright intelligence that makes the pure Arabian conscious of the formidable character of the boar and shy of him. Formerly a good many horses were imported from the Cape, and take them all round they were very staunch and steady, and the best by far as horses off which to shoot. About 1859 and 1860 a number of South American horses came into the Calcutta market, a stout, strong, and generally sound race, with good legs but large heavy heads, often of startling colours, as pie and skew-balds, and these were sold for prices varying from three to four hundred rupees each. I remember two in particular, a dun and a skew-bald, standing about fourteen-three, both good hacks and staunch hog-hunters, which were purchased for four hundred and fifty rupees each, and were, I think, about the best among those imported. Some were ugly Roman-nosed beasts, but as well as I can recollect nearly all had good clean and sound legs; and no wonder either, since they were young horses taken fresh from the Pampas, and put on board ship for about \$10 each, or say twenty rupees, and yet the speculation could not have been profitable, since it soon ceased, and that breed disappeared from our stables in the course of a very few years.

One of the grandest hog-hunters and cross-country horses I ever saw was a remarkably handsome bay stud-bred, nearly fifteen hands high, which was originally purchased in Behar for four hundred rupees. The pure Arab, common enough thirty years ago, has become almost extinct on this side of the country, a few brought down from the North-west Province and Bombay being about the only ones to be seen.

When I did get a really staunch Arab, I preferred him to any other breed, and, never riding over eleven and a-half

stone, and far more commonly below eleven, the Arab was well up to my weight for hog-hunting and hacking; moreover, if taken in hand when young, and properly treated, he can be taught everything a horse should do. Lastly, his sweetness of disposition and temper, as well as his pluck and endurance, more than make up for his little weaknesses.

Considering how this sport is followed, the number of serious accidents to the riders is comparatively small; broken arms, legs, and collar-bones are, of course, to be expected where the ground is rough and, as is often the case, completely hidden by grass and jungle, but fatal mishaps are rare. Small cuts and bruises in the foot and leg are not uncommon, and now and again a dismounted hunter is heard of as being wounded by the boar's tusks. I once witnessed a serious case of this last nature.

Hunting with the old Tent Club, T. M. R. and I, having disposed of our pig, and riding leisurely back to our starting-point to await our turn for the next run, noticed a knot of dismounted men standing round something white upon the ground, which, on nearer approach, we perceived to be one of our friends—Captain R.—who, it appeared, had been much cut up, and lay bleeding freely from a number of wounds on his legs and arms, but none of them, most fortunately, proving dangerous, he recovered completely in a month or six weeks. R.'s account of the accident was that he was suddenly charged as he was riding alone by a very large hog, which started out of the marsh round which we were hunting that day, and, coming straight at him, knocked his horse's forelegs from under him, and brought him down on his head. R., on falling off, was at once attacked as he lay disarmed on his back, kicking desperately at his assailant, who, however, succeeded in getting in several times and inflicting some bad cuts. The hog then seized R. by one of his hands, and having got over him, commenced a still more serious attack, when a happy thought struck R., who, promptly acting upon it, drew his "pugree" off his helmet with his disengaged hand, and wrapped it round his enemy's

staut, while he kicked out at the same time with all his strength. This proceeding so completely disconcerted the pig that it withdrew sulkily towards the water, leaving R. on the ground much cut and bleeding profusely.

Having remarked the nature of the wounds on R.'s legs, thighs, and hands, as well as the way in which they were given, I communicated my suspicions to W. F., our President, who agreed with me; accordingly, the following day, at precisely the hour at which R. had been assailed and upset, viz., just a little before sunset, F. and I walked our horses to the scene of the encounter and watched the marsh, spear in hand and horses at the stand. We stood thus some twenty paces apart for a few minutes only, when from the rushes and water emerged a large hog, which, after a moment's inspection of us, charged at full speed, tail and bristles standing on end, selecting me and my horse as its special objective. Moving promptly forward to get way on my nag, I was prepared to deliver my spear, when the hog passed on without pushing home the charge, whereon, throwing up my blade, I joined F. and told him that it was as we surmised, information received by him with a bland smile and a low chuckle. We kept our secret, and never let it be known that poor R. had been so badly treated by an immense old sow, whose couch in the jheel he had unwittingly approached. I noticed, as she passed almost under my spear-point, that she had tushes an inch in length or more, with which some of the wounds had been inflicted; but others, especially those on the hand and arm, were given with the teeth when she seized them in her mouth. Had R.'s assailant been a boar, the consequences would most probably have been fatal, since his position was such as to offer his whole front to its fearful rips; and what such an animal can do I once witnessed when a large one, meeting a youth of sixteen upon a village path, ripped him with one upward stroke from the groin to the upper part of the chest.

The wild swine of Bengal are not addicted to unseemly pranks, and very rarely come out as comic characters, but

even they will now and then indulge in a joke. Thus I have seen a boar, baulked in its attack, turn and seize the charged horse by the tail, and hang on sturdily till speared by me, who happened to be the next horseman in the chase. On another occasion, E. I. S. having slightly wounded a charging pig, the latter rose up on his hind legs, and made a series of upward cuts as he danced like a performing bear. Another day the pig was not the sole actor in the comic business, which was shared with him by a Portuguese clerk, a thorough good sportsman, who was in the habit of joining us in many of our shooting and hunting trips. Mr. William A. ("Billoo Sahib" he was called by his fellow-countrymen) was, albeit as black as a sloe, quite a European gentleman in his costume, whatever he may have been in other respects; and in public he aped the manners and the carriage of Lieutenant-Governors and other high civil dignitaries on State occasions, as he had opportunities of observing them at various times and places. "Billy," as I have said, was a good sportsman, and whether he rode his wiry little ponies with seven stone up, spear in hand, or gun on shoulder trudged manfully after feathered game, he did his *devoir*; and when the day's sport was over he smoked his cheroot with a grand air. One day, when he was good enough to accompany the beaters driving hogs for us, "Billoo Sahib" was taken by surprise in the open by one which had broken back, and, after firing a wild shot, took to his heels, the boar after him, both making good time over a short course. Presently, the pursuer gaining rapidly on the pursued, made a dash at what ought to have been the latter's seat of honour, but, annoyed and discomfited at its complete absence (from defect of original construction and long wear and tear on office stools), passed between Mr. Billoo's extremely slender legs, and, taking him up on his back, carried him some distance before casting him off with a surly grunt. Now most men would have been somewhat disconcerted under such treatment, and even a Bishop might be pardoned for using harsh and unclerical language under a similar provocation; but not so Mr.

William A., who, quietly wiping his face with his rag of a pocket handkerchief, remarked, with a smile, that that pig was "d——d perfunctory," a word he had often read in high official correspondence and admired extremely, without fathoming its deep import, and then he resumed the business of the hour. The last time I saw this worthy he was, though over seventy years of age, an active overseer of roads or something of that nature, and very well-to-do, but he had no immediate intention of retiring from service, as he informed me, desiring to stick to harness till he was seventy-five before retiring to rest on his estate. Poor fellow! he came to a very sad end the following year.





CHAPTER VI.

Tigers and Tiger-shooting—Disappearing from many Districts of the Lower Provinces—Formerly extremely Numerous in Bengal—A Great Bag—Plassey, as it Was and Is—Difference in Tigers—Size and Length—Time and Method of Measurement—Man-eaters—The old Man-eating Tigress of Raipoor—Man-eaters often Lusty and Handsome—A famous Man-eating Tiger killed—Wild Santhals—Roaring—The “Provider”—Adventure with Tiger and Jackals—“Bobbery” Pack attacked by Jackals—Desperate Fights between Tigers—Cannibalism of Tigers—Relative Strength of Tigers and wild Bull Buffaloes—Tiger and English Bull.

WHATEVER impression it may convey to others, to me the very name of tiger, tigre, or tyger, spell it as you will, carries with it a sense of power, cruelty, and cunning all combined which no other word does in the same degree. I think some “Shikarees” are affected in a similar manner by the mere mention of “bagh” by any one within hearing. I admit that I have no love for the animal; no desire to cherish it, or make it a constant companion, as certain persons did in India, and some may still do for aught I know to the contrary, holy fakeers and hermits as well as others; but if I love tigers little, I love snakes, sharks, and crocodiles less; and yet the desire to attend the funerals of these last is never so keen as the longing to be in at that of the first; they (the tigers) have never done me harm; true they may have jumped upon me once and again, but on the whole they have afforded me more pleasure than pain, and I owe them many a pleasant hour spent in sweet communion together in the jungles; but yet I never see a tiger without picking out upon his sleek hide the particular spot which I would make the billet of my rifle bullet.

Some persons are known to experience a creeping sensation at the presence of unseen cats in the room they occupy; others (not of the ruder sex) will vociferously take to their beds and mosquito-nets at the sight of a cockroach on the rampage; and there are still others to whom a tiny mouse is an object of terror and loathing; it may be a kindred feeling which stirs within me at the sight, smell, or mere unseen proximity of this big cat. I have awoke suddenly at night, and tossed about in my bed, unable to resettle to slumber for an hour or two at a stretch, for no apparent reason whatever, and next morning have found the fresh foot-prints of a tiger round my bungalow or tent.

The very beauty of the tiger, the *beauté du diable*, in truth, and the vivid combination of black, yellow, and white on his glossy skin, is terrible to look upon, let alone the malignant cunning shot from his eye, and the cannibal hunger expressed in his curling lips and flashing white teeth.

I suppose a man-eating lion is not better or more pleasant than a man-eating tiger, but the former does not create the same sense of acute antipathy as does the latter; it may be because his attacks are more open, or because he is somewhat noisy, and addicted to roaring and bouncing about generally, whereas the other is silent and smooth in his movements, indulging, and that rarely, only in a low moan or a deep-drawn breath, sounding like a snarl with a growl at the tail of it. An asp, a cobra, or a "karait" is as deadly, and far more dangerous, being small and readily concealed in the grassy paths, in the dark chamber, or even in one's bed; a shark or a crocodile is as murderous and more voracious; still I believe that these creatures do not excite fear and dislike in the same degree as the tiger.

This gruesome beast has disappeared from most districts of the Lower Provinces, but it is not very long ago that he and his kindred held possession of most parts of Bengal as completely as they do of the Soonderbuns at the present moment. If asked by a young sportsman newly arrived in Calcutta where he should go to shoot a tiger, I might now

hesitate to consider my answer ; but if questioned as to the locality where he was most likely to meet with one, I would at once suggest an evening stroll in a grassy glade of the beauteous (?) Soonderbuns, where he could watch the young fawns skipping beside their speckled dams, while the striped beast he sought prepared to make a supper off him ; and if my young questioner acted upon that suggestion, I confess I should not expect to see him more.

There are persons whose minds are so ill-balanced as to regret the present paucity of tigers, especially in the fields and groves around certain schools and colleges ; but there can be no doubt that, although their absence may have something to do with the too-rapid growth of population and the consequent occurrence of famines and other calamities at the present day, even the most morbid mind must allow that the country and people are better for the absence of the tigers which did patrol duty upon the roads close to Calcutta itself, and that too not at night only.

Some idea of the numbers of tigers infesting Bengal less than a century ago, may be formed by a reference to that interesting old work, "Oriental Field Sports," by Captain Thomas Williamson, who served upwards of twenty years in Bengal, and describes vividly, not only the sports he shared in, about the end of the last century, but the state of the country, the habits of the Europeans of his time, and many other things, not to be found without much research. It is remarkable that although the gallant author spent so many years in India, his knowledge of the vernacular is such as would do no credit to a candidate going up now "for the lower standard." Writing of the river running under the field of Plassey, Captain Williamson names it the "Baugrutty, *i. e.*, the Tigers' River ; it was formerly surrounded by large grass jungles teeming with tigers, buffaloes, etc. In another place he informs us that a tiger is sometimes called "seer," which means in the Moors' language the head, as the tiger undoubtedly is the head or principal beast of the field ! Again, he tells us that the panther, for its partiality "for

climbing trees, bears the name of 'Suckree baug,' literally implying the tree-tiger." Oh! Captain Williamson, not to know that "Sukra bagha" was even in your time a hyena, which did not love to climb trees! We have these lessons in the vernacular or Moors' language from one who, we are told in these latter days, lived with the natives of the country on terms of easy familiarity, and therefore knew intimately their character, habits and language! There is here some reason to doubt the extraordinary familiarity with the natives on the part of our predecessors, so much vaunted by certain writers, and so warmly advocated by others; certain it is that our Captain did not perfect himself in the "Moors'," through the medium of books and "Moonshees;" however, he is better up in sport, and all relating to it, as understood in the eighteenth century, and tells us (page 238, vol. I, 2nd edition, 1819), that "about Daudpoor, Plassey, Aughadup, and especially along the banks of the Jellinglue, which borders the Cossim-bazaar island to the eastward, they (*i. e.*, tigers) are known to cross and recross during the day, as well as by night; seeming to consider the stream as no impediment. From Aughadup in particular, they pass over to the extensive jungle of Patally, that has ever been famous for the number it contained. I have in passing through it seen four several tigers within the space of two hours; and a gentleman who was proceeding by dawk, that is post, in his palankeen, in the year 1782, saw three absolutely lying in different parts of the road as he went on. Paul* once made an excursion thither with a number of elephants under his charge; and in about a week killed twenty-three royal tigers, besides several leopards." This is a bag which has probably never been equalled either before or after 1782, and a party of sportsmen trying that country at the present day might possibly within a week kill one or two panthers, but never a tiger would they see. In another place the same writer states that he has known three sentries to be carried off in one night from the camp of his regiment while on

* A Dutch sportsman, and not the Apostle.

march. Berhampoor appears to have been then in the centre of the very best sporting country, including both banks of the Bhagirutty and Jellinglue rivers west to east, and from Chogdaho to the Ganges from south to north; and down to 1850 that country was good for sport; for hog-hunting especially Dacca too was in the midst of the very choicest shooting and hunting to be had in the Eastern Districts, and maintained its reputation up to the same period, although nothing to be compared with its palmy days previous to 1840, and earlier times. Colgong and Peerpointee on the western side, even to the time of the laying down of the line of the East Indian Railway, were good for all kinds of game, both small and great. Fifty years ago, tigers, panthers, bears, and many kinds of deer, were abundant within ten to twenty miles of the eastern capital, Dacca, then a larger and more populous town than it is at the present day. The country about Plassey and Rajmehal literally swarmed with game; while the roads about Santipoor, Ranaghat, and Chogdaho, were unsafe on account of tigers, and gangs of "dakoits" a hundred years ago.

Captain Williamson gives an interesting account of the famous field of Plassey, as seen in his day (1790 to 1810 ?), although I think his statement that Clive occupied the Nawab's hunting-seat at that place for a day or two previous to the battle is open to doubt, and I am inclined to think that we should read "previous" as "subsequent." "Plassey," he writes, "was ever famous both for tigers and leopards; the surrounding country afforded choice covers of every description. The house that formerly stood on the bank of the river, was built by Surajah Dowlah, formerly Nabob of Bengal, who was defeated about (*sic*) the year 1757. It was intended for a hunting-seat, and was occupied by Lord Clive as his quarters for a day or two previous to that memorable victory, which gave to the British possession of all the Southern Provinces of Bengal. The edifice was completed in the Indian style, and until swept away by the river which undermined the bank, it was kept in tolerable state of repair

by the succeeding Nabobs of Moorshedabad, who never refused such European gentlemen as applied for permission to occupy it while on hunting parties. Latterly, the building was neglected altogether, and all who chose took possession for the time, suiting their own convenience. There was a large area, of perhaps an acre of ground, enclosed with a wall, and having in front a large arched gateway. Within this space was once a garden, which, when I first visited Plassey, was kept in excellent order, and supplied such gentlemen as passed up or down the river, or by land, with good vegetables, for which the gardener usually received a present, such as no doubt, in the aggregate, very fully answered his purpose, and stimulated him to industry. However, when the house began to decay, and was gradually less resorted to, the garden began to decline, and ultimately became a wilderness of weeds and rubbish. The gate was destroyed for fuel, the wall gave way, and in lieu of being serviceable, the place became the haunt of wild beasts. Colonel John Mordaunt, about the year 1787, landed from his budgrow, as he was proceeding from Calcutta to Lucknow, and found a royal tiger asleep in the verandah or balcony. The Colonel being an excellent shot with his rifle, soon dispatched the brindled visitor. Many have found herds of deer in the garden."

When I last visited Plassey in 1875, a tree under which Clive is said to have stood during the battle, when the rain fell heavily, was just tottering to its fall, on account of the river having undermined its base; and it must now be gone, and with it the tomb of the "fakeer," who was killed by a round shot while standing beside the General, and was buried under that tree. A house of masonry standing near the same spot was pointed out as the residence of the descendants of the shopkeeper or merchant who undertook to supply with grain Clive's little army on its arrival here, and during the halt at and march from Cutwa on the opposite bank of the Bhagirutty. For the services rendered by him, this contractor or grain dealer received from Lord Clive the land which his descendants hold to this day, as I have been informed.

Much of this famous field of battle has been swept away by the encroachments of the river on its left bank about this neighbourhood, and little now remains by which it may be identified; but the low marshy plain described as lying on the left of Surajah Dowlah's host may still be seen, denuded, however, of the jungle which covered it in old times. Within the last dozen or twenty years, round shot and bullets have been picked up by ploughmen turning the soil, but none, I think very recently.

It may be remarked that, in the above extract from Captain Williamson's book, the author, though living in the quarter of the century immediately after the great battle, appeared doubtful as to its precise date, and refers to the latter as "about 1757"! Will any officer of Her Majesty's army, writing in 1890 of the Indian mutinies and rebellion, mention them as events which occurred "about 1857"?

Most writers of the past as well as of the present times mention a "royal tiger," as if it differed in some way from others; has a second variety been seen and described? Between Benares and Arracan, and from Ganjam to the uttermost parts of Assam, only one kind has ever been met with by me; nor have I heard any sportsman speak of any other. Of course, with a difference in the habitat, some difference in the build, size, or colour may occur; it is just possible, also, that the tigers of Central Asia and the Northern territories of China along the Amoor may differ more than this from the Indian variety; but I do not think any marked difference has been satisfactorily established. It is well known to sportsmen that the tiger of the hills is stouter and shorter than the tiger of the plains; the tail of the former, too, is shorter in proportion to the length of the body, according to my observation; but I may be wrong in this conclusion. Mr. J. shot a tiger one evening at the back of the Frontier Police Lines at Rungamuttee, while three of us were holding a committee in them; this was, according to my ideas, a fine specimen of the hill tiger; a very stout and powerful beast,

with an immense head, shoulders, and forearms, and yet he measured only nine and a-half feet, or something less, his tail being exceedingly short, unusually thick at the base, and tapering away almost to a point. An ordinary plains tiger, with such a head and fore-quarters, would have measured ten feet, or close upon it.

While differing sometimes in minor points, such as tint, the pattern and length of the dark stripes, the rings on the tail, and certain spots or dabs of colour on the face, nine out of ten very closely resemble each other in all three points, age and sex taken into account. So, too, as to habits and character; there are no certain rules to be laid down, whether the animals infest the hills of Assam, the grass plains of Bengal, or the "Soonderbuns." A hill tiger may prove a confirmed man-eater, a plains tiger a cattle-killer, and the Soonderbun cousin a lover of pork and venison only. Old writers do not attempt any identification of varieties of the species, so far as I am aware, and very few modern ones have ventured to do so. Major Leveson, in his book, "Sport in Many Lands," while expressing his own opinion as to there being but one variety, writes that natives in many parts of India over which he has hunted, recognise three kinds of tigers: the "loda-bagh," the "oontia-bagh," and the "admeekhane-wallah." The first of these three varieties is described as a "game-killer," living in the fastnesses of hills and forests, subsisting on deer and other animals, and rarely showing himself near the habitations of man. The second, or "cattle-killer," is portrayed as a much larger and heavier tiger than the first, carrying a coat less brilliantly yellow in its ground colour, and marked with fainter stripes. The last, or "man-eater," is described as not being numerous, but desperately skulking and cunning. It is possible that in some parts of India varieties may be distinguished by natives; but, without being so indiscreet as to deny their existence, I must state that in Bengal they are unknown, or at least unrecognised. We have all three kinds, undoubtedly, in abundance—the game-hunter, the cattle-thief, and the man-eater;

but with us they are supposed to differ only in disposition and habits, and not in form, colour, or size.

It has been surmised by many sportsmen, European and native, that the Soonderbun tiger is in some respects unlike his kindred of the hills and plains; that he is longer and thinner in build, and looser in his skin. A friend, who has greater experience of the Soonderbuns from Sagur Island to Rahnumbad than anyone in the country, gives it as his opinion that the tiger of those woods and salt or brackish waters is longer from tip of nose to tip of tail, but not so high, as those of other localities; their footprints assuredly seem to me to be smaller in general than those of others, and such individuals as have been seen by me appeared certainly rather lower in stature; but the sole distinctive characteristic of this tiger, so far as is known, is its utter fearlessness of man, and its inveterate propensity to kill and devour him on all and every opportunity; taking this amiable creature, therefore, as he is, I should say he was, without exception, the worst and most confirmed man-eater of all his species.

Living, as the Soonderbun tigers do, an amphibious sort of life in thick—and to man—impenetrable forests and thickets, constantly crossing and recrossing creeks and rivers of salt or brackish water, and often obtaining none other to drink, they might reasonably be expected to differ more from the rest of their kind than they actually do, as a matter of fact.

It does not appear that the colour of tigers varies much according to their habitat; some may be a little darker and brighter than others, but the general tone is rarely departed from, and thus tigers from youth to maturity display the brightest tints; from maturity to old age the colours fade, the brilliant yellow becomes paler, the stripes grow brownish and fainter, till at extreme old age the ground is a pale tawny, and the stripes are faintly marked. Tigers with white skins—Albinos, in short—are rarely met with; I have seen but one such skin, and that was not a pure white, but

a faint lemon tint, the stripes being just perceptible in bright sunshine. A very old tiger, with such a hide as described, lived for many years on the hills between Ramghur and Ranchi, in Chota Nagpoor, and at last fell to the bullet of a "Shikaree," but I never heard who secured the trophy, and very probably the skin was never noticed, and was destroyed in common with others. Mr. Woods, in his book of natural history, tells us that a tiger with a very pale skin was well known in London about the year 1820.

Albinos among animals and birds are by no means rare; of hog-deer albinos I have seen many, but have never seen or heard of them among panthers or bears in Bengal; among buffaloes a pink or salmon colour is not uncommon in the wild as well as in the domesticated animals.

As to the size and length of tigers, there has been a great diversity of opinion, but of late years this question has been definitely decided by many experienced sportsmen, who having taken accurate measurements, have recorded the results in books published by themselves or others; among them may be named Mr. Shillingford, of Purneah, to whom we are indebted for much valuable information on this head.

My old authority, Captain Williamson, states truly enough: "I never yet heard of a tiger infesting a country, nor, indeed, of one being killed, but what he was the largest ever seen! However, in such frequency of monstrous growth, I will venture to assert that nine in ten do not measure ten feet from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail. I am sensible that when in a state of provocation they swell themselves greatly, for which the bristling up of their furs would account sufficiently." Also, "the tiger proved to be the largest ever killed on the Cossim-bazaar island. The circumference of the joint of his wrist was twenty-six inches, he was thirteen feet and a few inches from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail, and in a right line, taken as he lay, from the sole of his fore paw to the tip of his withers between the shoulders gave very nearly four feet for his height."

The last extract describes a monster indeed, a very giant

among his kind; but to discredit this measurement, which seems to have been carefully taken as the tiger lay freshly killed, would not be justifiable any more than to reject the accounts of men attaining to eight, and eight and a half feet in height. It is a strange coincidence that the very largest skin I ever saw was one given me by a relative, and it was that of another monster shot in the same vicinity many years afterwards, but on the right bank of the Bhagirutty, and not on "the island of Cossim-bazaar," which then boasted of no jungles capable of harbouring tigers. That skin measured thirteen feet in length, was of proportionately vast breadth, and therefore had not been unduly stretched longitudinally; the tail was rather long but not in an extraordinary degree; the breadth across the back was immense; the colour was a pale tawny with faint brown stripes widely marked, as if Nature allowing only a certain number of stripes to each individual, the unusual growth of the hide had caused them to be separated at greater intervals than was common. This was the skin of a very old and extraordinarily huge tiger; on the shoulders it was as thick and tough as that of a wild bull, and it exhibited several old scars of cuts and bullet wounds.

In the illustrated edition of "Natural History," by the Rev. J. G. Woods, M.A., F.L.S., is a description of "Jungla" (Junglee?) the famous fighting-tiger of Lucknow: "Jungla is one of the finest, if not the very finest tiger that has ever set foot on English ground, and even when penned in the strait limits of a wooden cage that would not permit his noble head to be raised to its full height, and only gave room for a single short step backwards and forwards, his grand proportions were most striking. His present age is about five years. In height he is about four feet, and the relative proportions can be judged from the illustration. The total length of the animal is said by his keeper to be thirteen feet six inches, and in girth he measures four feet eight inches. The principal peculiarity in the appearance of this animal is that nearly all the stripes are double, including

those which partially surround the tail. Sometimes these dark streaks are very long, and sometimes comparatively short and very wide, leaving a broad interval of the golden yellow fur between the outer and inner stripes. Between many of these streaks are placed a number of spots, similar to those which appear on the leopard's skin, but the spots are small in size and not so distinctly outlined as the stripes. They are rather thickly scattered by the shoulder and flanks, occasionally making their appearance on the sides. Over the eyes some thick black lines are drawn, which closely resemble a stag's horn, and on the forehead runs a series of equally dark stripes, which remind the spectator of the figure of a bat with outstretched wings. The ears are black with a solitary white spot upon the back of each ear He has been matched against many antagonists, and always came off victorious in the fight, whether his opponent were a strong-horned and hard-headed buffalo, or a tiger like himself. The last tiger to which he was opposed was killed in fifteen minutes."

Now "Jungla" (or Junglee) must indeed have been a magnificent beast if the above description and his keeper's measurement be quite accurate, but there is just a little room to doubt the complete accuracy of the latter. This tiger and "the largest ever killed on Cossim-bazaar island," according to the measurements recorded by Captain Williamson, were of equal size—and both giants among their fellows.

The double stripes and the spots between the streaks on Jungla's skin are uncommon, but the marks over his eyes and on his forehead are such as may be seen on every individual, although perhaps in his case they were more pronounced than usual. The portrait which accompanies the above description depicts a very heavy thick-set tiger, with a skin more closely marked than ordinary with single and double stripes of very deep hue. Mr. Sterndale and Captain Baldwin, in their excellent works "Leonee" and "The Game of Bengal," agree that tigers rarely exceed ten feet in length. Jerdon gives nine to nine and a half feet as the

average length of tigers, but is disposed to admit that some have been killed measuring ten feet, or "perhaps a few inches over." My own experience, added to that of several friends competent to give opinions on this subject is, that the last-named authority under-estimates a little the length of large males; and that while ten feet may be accepted as that of a fine specimen of the tiger of the plains, ten and a quarter is not rare, nor ten and a half unheard of; although exceptional tigresses measure fully a foot less, and one of nine and a half feet is uncommon; nine to nine and a quarter being the ordinary measurement.

Naturally the question arises, how then is it that in that admirable and most interesting book, "Tiger Shooting in India," measurements of these animals killed in Central India are recorded over and over again as ranging from eleven to twelve feet? Thus taking the figures as to the first half-dozen (pages, 7, 50, 56, 60, 73, and 89), the average length of males attains to eleven feet eight and a half inches; and the first three females (pages, 48, 122, and 126)—one being but a young one—to nine feet seven inches and a third, while a tigress shot, as described in page 190, measured ten feet six inches.

Now these measurements exceed by two feet or thereabouts the average of males shot in Bengal, and by seven inches that of females. If they are absolutely correct, the conclusion is that the Central Indian tiger is very much longer than his brother of the Lower Provinces, but the tigress is only a little more so than her Bengal sister.

If the excellent drawings which illustrate this book may be relied upon as correctly depicting the scenery of the country in which Captain Rice and his companions killed their tigers, it may be here stated for the information of young sportsmen that in Bengal they will find no such open country infested by these animals, any more than they will find such large tigers and tigresses.

Now Colonel Gordon Cumming in "Wild Men and Wild Beasts," has given the measurements of some tigers and

tigresses shot by him in Western India, which are very much less than those recorded by Captain Rice (pages 312-25), the average of four tigers, two of them, pronounced stout or fine heavy beasts, being nine feet six and a half inches, and of the same number of tigresses eight feet nine inches. The author remarks (page 325) that "many men have talked to me of tigers twelve and eleven feet long, and in some countries they may attain that size, but speaking from my own experience, I can only say I have not fallen in with them in Malwa or Minar. I have seen tigers nearly ten feet long, whose skins could easily have been stretched when fresh to eleven or more feet, but the breadth would have been greatly diminished and the beauty of the skin impaired."

The difference in the measurements in the two books, "Tiger Shooting in India," and "Wild Men and Wild Beasts," is startling, and amounts to two feet two inches in males, and ten inches in females.

The method of measuring has of course much to do with the measurements recorded, as also has the time when they were taken; for example, a tiger measuring ten feet in length while warm, immediately after death, will be three or four inches less some hours afterwards when stark and cold, but the skin on being stripped and pegged out may stretch to eleven feet or even more. According to this experience, the large skin in my possession, mentioned above as that of the very old and monstrous beast shot in Moorshedabad district, must have been that of a male not less than eleven and a half feet in length when alive. Now he was one among hundreds, and yet not so long as the average of the first half-dozen given in Captain Rice's work as shot in Central India.

As some evidence of the extreme length attained by male tigers and panthers, I may be permitted here to state that, among hundreds in Assam and Bengal, killed by me singly and in company with other sportsmen, ten feet four inches was that of the largest and heaviest killed in the former Province, in the Kamroop district, and this individual had a comparatively short thick tail. The largest panther measured eight feet

three inches, and was killed in Eastern Bengal. Both were measured while warm with a tape from tip of nose to tip of tail, over the head, between the ears, and along the spine, the tail pulled out stiffly to obtain its full length. In the case of tigers, ten feet three inches (killed in the Goalpara district) is the largest after the above; several of ten feet and an inch or two; while of panthers, eight feet was the next largest in size, many about seven feet and a half, but far more between the last dimensions and seven feet.

So far then as is proved by my own experience, lusty, full-grown tigers in Bengal and Assam are usually a trifle under ten feet; but when the tails are shorter than ordinary, they rarely attain nine feet nine inches in length, fairly measured while warm.

Then, again, some writers insist upon man-eaters being, as a rule, gaunt and mangy, as if their food disagreed with them (as we may well wish it might do), or that their consciences pricked them and interfered with their digestion. Long experience will not support this poetical idea of the anthropophagi, and the retribution which follows their misdeeds, since some have been among the stoutest and sleekest tigers shot by me. Of course, an old animal, weak and diseased, may from sheer necessity infest the paths and watering-places of a village, and carry off therefrom men, women, and children. Such an one, haunted, about the year 1864, some places in the Raipoor police-station jurisdiction, now in the Bankurah, and formerly in the Manbhoom district, killing, as her custom was, women and children solely, and eating only the softest portions of the bodies. She might have been destroyed easily, and I was most anxious to secure her, but was prevented from so doing by my duties removing me to a distant province. Ultimately she was killed by a "Shikaree" and her head was shown me long afterwards. Looking at that skull from a little distance, one might have been disposed at the first glance to call it that of an old bear, but closer examination proved it to be that of an extremely aged tigress. The skull was much depressed and elongated, and

was almost toothless, a few broken stumps only remaining. No wonder, then, that she felt herself incapable of pursuing, seizing, and holding down bullocks, deer, and wild hog.

One of the handsomest, fattest, and most powerful of tigers ever bagged by me was a desperate and fearless man-eater, who picked up people from their very homesteads and levied toll along the paths and roads on market days in broad daylight and in the most open manner; but it may be admitted that the prevailing idea as to the superior cunning of man-eaters is correct, but that of inferior courage is open to doubt.

The large man-eater above alluded to was killed while I was living at Jalaisur, on the left bank of the Soobunreeka river, in the Midnapoor district, a place to which we retired from Contai in the rainy season when completely worn out by the bad climate of that station. Jalaisur was in our jurisdiction, and boasted what hotel-keepers style a comparatively "salubrious air."

It was about the end of October; S., my assistant and chum, had gone away on leave, and thus I was alone, and, being left without much official work at that, the deadest season of the year, it was quite a relief to be called upon by the inhabitants of some villages on the opposite bank to rid them of a tiger which was playing havoc among them. There was then, as there is still, an abundance of game in and around that country—tigers, panthers, bears, spotted and barking deer, sambur, and various game birds; buffaloes and antelope have, I believe, disappeared, though once plentiful too; but the season and the wet condition of the country were against sport, except snipe-shooting and an occasional excursion after a panther or a bear. My work being light then, and no other sport engrossing my time, I devoted nearly a fortnight to the search for that tiger, beating with my elephants at intervals of two or three days all the heavy jungles round about for many miles without once sighting him, and finding only his fresh lairs, the bones of his victims, and other signs of his near presence. Once I came upon some of

his hair on a spot where he had taken a comforting roll very recently on a sandy path, to rid himself of ticks and other parasites, but never a tiger did I see, and my zeal for the public good was becoming cold, when one day, about noon, two men brought me news of a woman having been seized in the midst of their hamlet, only a couple of hours previously, while bringing water from a pond.

The men could only tell me that the animal which had carried off the woman was a "bagh," and, not having seen it themselves, were unable to give any description of it. Being engaged at the time on something I wished to get off my hands, and believing the beast to be a panther only, I ordered one man to remain with me as a guide, and the other to return to his village to track up from it the retreat of the animal, and, having done so, to watch till my arrival the spot to which the woman had been carried. Meanwhile, ordering two elephants to be prepared, I resumed my work, which was not concluded till past three o'clock in the afternoon.

I had been told that the "bagh" (which might mean a tiger or a panther equally) would be found about three miles off on the opposite bank of a river. Allowing, therefore, an hour to cover that distance, I calculated upon having fully a couple of hours of daylight to beat up the piece of light jungle in which the animal, I was told, would lie up in all likelihood; but when three, four, and five miles were done, and my guide still pointed ahead, I began to regret seriously the delay in starting. At length—we had gone about six miles through hamlets and rice-fields without seeing a vestige of covert—my Santhal guide, seated behind me in the "howdah," pointed silently with his finger to a bush a hundred paces ahead and to a thin line of mimosas about the same distance off to our right, and gave me to understand, without uttering a word, that we had reached our goal. As quietly as possible the two elephants advanced abreast a score or two of paces, when out of the shadow of the bush above-mentioned gently rose from a sitting posture a nearly naked little

Santhal, armed with bow and axe, who indicated by gestures that what we sought was on our right.

Between us and the line of thorny little trees was nothing but a heavy crop of rice in ear, through which we made our way very gingerly, and I was endeavouring to pierce the shadows of the mimosas, expecting to see there the panther crouching upon the remains of the unfortunate woman, when a large round object appeared over the tall grain, which at first I could not make out to my satisfaction, as the bright rays of the sinking sun struck upon it almost horizontally, bathing it and the standing yellow grain in a golden haze. A step or two more, and the object on which my eyes were fixed rose very slowly, and then I knew that the tiger I had so long sought in vain was glaring savagely at me above the ripening paddy, and no paltry panther. A moment of death-like silence ensued, and then a bullet from a double Westley-Richards rifle struck the terrible beast, who, to obtain a fair view of us, had raised his head a little by placing his fore-paws upon a narrow ridge dividing two fields. With an angry grunt the tiger sprang forward, receiving the bullet from the left barrel, and turning over on his back into the rice-field, from which he sent out loud and fierce growls.

Seeing now that the tiger's line of retreat, should he wish to avoid us, would be through the trees behind him, I moved round to cut it off if attempted, and afterwards advancing steadily from that direction, I came upon him as he lay on his stomach facing me, mouth open, eyes shooting out angry lightnings, and ears tightly pressed down against his head, but unable to rise, his spine being broken by the second shot, the first having struck him within an inch of his heart; and thus we stood for a few seconds, eyes looking into eyes, only a dozen paces apart, the murderous beast endeavouring all the time to drag his maimed and helpless body forward upon his tremendous forearms, while I waited, finger on trigger, to take in fully the grand sight before me. As the disc of the blood-red sun touched the horizon I fired once more, and the dreaded man-eater ceased to breathe.

The valiant little Santhal who had kept solitary watch upon the tiger was alone present with us for some time afterwards, as no village was very near. This courageous man, armed as has already been stated with an axe and a little bow which looked fit only to bring down birds, had tracked the tiger from where it had eaten his prey to the field where he lay up, and without doubt each knew of the other's precise position, the tiger waiting till it suited him to attack and seize, and the Santhal, from the concealment of the bush, vigilantly watching every wave of the grain, ready to take to flight if the enemy charged, or to maintain his position till we arrived.

It was long before a sufficient number of men could be collected to help us in raising the dead tiger upon the back of the pad-elephant, while I and my orderly occupied the howdah on the other; and it was fully ten o'clock before we reached home, our return in the bright moonlight being accompanied by the inhabitants of the villages we passed, who all demanded and obtained a good view of their terrible persecutor. Men, women, and children attended us in crowds till we gained the river bank, and there they took leave, requesting permission for another look by daylight next morning before the skin was removed, a permission gladly given.

On returning home I measured this tiger, and found him to be ten feet and an inch long when stiff and cold; he must therefore have been ten feet two or three inches at least when warm. He was extremely fat and lusty, and had a very brilliant and perfect skin, without scar or blemish. I judged him to have been five or six years old, certainly not more than seven; his teeth, claws, and coat all proved him to be in the very prime and the fullest vigour of life. After this no more human beings were carried off and devoured for many a day in that country side; but the memory of that monster, and how he was slain, was not forgotten for years by the grateful Santhal villagers. It does one's heart good to serve such a simple and good-hearted people, still uncon-

taminated by much intercourse with the ordinary Bengalees and the corrupt surroundings of our courts, living as they do in remote villages in a wild part of the country.

Another subject regarding tigers, on which writers differ greatly, is that of "roaring." Some, and I believe the majority, have it that tigers, like lions, are much addicted to it, and resembling Captain Rice's tigers, roar when roused, when charging, and when wounded, besides doing so at other times, while a few maintain that they rarely do so, the sound emitted being a hoarse, guttural growl, more or less prolonged. Perhaps there is, after all, no real difference of opinion, the "roar" of one sportsman being the growl of another; at all events, it is a most terrible sound of concentrated rage, ferocity, and resistless power, which must be heard to be fully realised. I do not think that I have heard above half-a-dozen times anything which can be properly styled a roar, and then it was the calling of tigers and tigresses from different jungles at the pairing season.

The ordinary sound heard at night when the animal is prowling about, is a low, long-drawn moan, and sometimes only a hoarse grunt, a whine, or a kind of sniff, these last being the sounds generally heard in menageries. Colonel Gordon Cumming truly remarks ("Wild Men and Wild Beasts," page 164)—"A tiger, when lying wounded in a thicket, will sometimes growl, but when he charges, his cry is more of a deep cavernous grunt, very horrible to hear, and well calculated to try a man's nerves. On one or two rare occasions I have heard a tiger roar, and have oftentimes heard him growl, but the war-cry which he gives when charging is quite distinct from either of these."

A tiger and tigress separated by open ground, which they fear to cross in daylight, will call loudly to each other all day long at short intervals till nightfall, when they will meet, and then will ensue a caterwauling of the orthodox house-top sort, but of a most terrific and magnificent loudness. Conceive a chorus got up by a hundred pairs of cats, multiply copiously, and even then you will fail to realise the awful sounds. Should

a second male be within hearing the concert will reach its climax.

All sportsmen throughout India write of an animal which leads, accompanies, or follows the tiger on its nocturnal prowling, and although almost all agree that it is a jackal only, different reasons are given for this strange association. Many native "Shikarees," whose poetic souls and strong imaginations subdue their common sense and the evidence of their vision, maintain that this is quite a different animal to the ordinary jackal, and one of a fearful and supernatural nature. Some assert that they are creatures possessed by the uneasy spirits of the departed, made food of by tigers, and unable to rest till certain rites be performed over their unburied or uncremated bones, according as they may have been Mahomedans or Hindoos in life; others that the spirits are devils leading the tigers to the destruction of their natural enemies, the human race. These and other similar superstitions are more common at present among the wild inhabitants of forests, hills, and remote jungle hamlets than among the ordinary people of the plains, who either altogether reject them, or say that doubtless the belief of their fathers was based on truth; but the presence of Europeans in the country, in considerable numbers, has driven away evil spirits, as disliking or dreading to consort with those over whom they exercise neither fear nor any other influence. This last position is contested by another class of persons addicted to the gratuitous instruction of their more ignorant countrymen through the medium of the cheap vernacular press, who, while they attempt a burlesque imitation of Europeans in their own persons, maintain that the superior malignancy of these greater demons has cast out the other and lesser ones from the country, so that it is worse off now than it was before in the good old times of yore.

By whatever name the creature be called elsewhere, it is known in Bengal as the "phuao," which I take to be nothing more than a bad imitation of the cry it emits; a cry so fearful and startling as to curdle the blood of the timid and

to alarm the boldest unaccustomed to hear it; it is a loud prolonged yell of terror, of mental and physical pain, the keenest of disappointed expectations, blasted hopes, and acute toothache, all combined, multiplied a hundredfold and served up piping hot at intervals of a few seconds; at least that is what it seems to be, but as a plain matter of fact it is only the natural yell of the jackal when suddenly or excessively startled, and is given forth not only as an easy relief to its own mind, but as a warning to its friends and relations. Having stood within a few paces of the "provider" when it sent up this cry, and watched its conduct in the presence of a tiger, a panther, a brace of big Australian hounds, of a "bobbery pack" in full cry, and even a firebrand hurled suddenly at it with good aim, I know that no "provision" is intended or dreamt of, but that fear alone causes it; also that an amiable desire to warn others draws forth frequent repetitions. I could cite instances of this without number, but let the following suffice:—

One afternoon as I was about to fire at a tiger on the outskirts of a jungle, a couple of "providers," who previously were trotting ahead leisurely, keeping half an eye upon me, set up this terrific cry on perceiving the brindled tyrant, who had business enough of his own to engage all his attention, without being bothered by the chase of a couple of mangy jackals, who therefore had really nothing to fear from him then, but simply were too startled to abstain from a loud expression of their feelings; even after the object of their dread had fallen dead they maintained the howls, running about in a wild and excited manner, whisking their brushes and cutting extraordinary antics, quite regardless of me.

One night in camp two very fine and powerful brindled hounds which lay at my feet, suddenly bounded out of the tent after a jackal, on which its companion set up the same cry. One morning, chasing a jackal on the laterite plain west of the church at Midnapoor, my "bobbery pack" ran up to him in the low dwarf "sal," and again the same yell was uttered; and not in vain, for immediately afterwards two or

three more jackals came cantering up out of the "sal" and attacked my dogs in the most determined style, so that I had to ride to their assistance with my hunting whip. This time the cry may have conveyed some meaning beyond fear and warning, though I think it was not so; but that rousing up the other jackals it caused them to run to the rescue of their comrade on seeing his persecutors were only dogs no bigger than themselves. On another occasion a jackal prowling through a thicket having unexpectedly come upon a panther crouching in the covert, started such a dance and song as would have raised blushes to the cheeks of a whole tribe of Red Indians on the war-path. Why that lazy beast of a panther did not get up and stop the infernal howlings and gyrations of this "provider" is more than I could then understand, though now I think he liked them as tickling his vanity; however, he very soon had something else tickling him, which he did not like so well.

Be it understood that the above are the impressions of an unscientific and unpoetical man, who may be quite mistaken, and jackals, after all, may in some manner unknown to him provide meat for their patrons by unmelodious songs and uncanny dances. Any way, it is a most demoniac and unearthly cry which chills the blood of the belated traveller who hears it close to him as he follows a narrow jungle track still some miles from home and safety.

It is a subject of frequent remark that far more tigresses than tigers are killed; I should say about five of the former to two of the latter, of full or nearly full grown animals, cubs not being taken into account. This may be attributed to the operations of several causes known to the experienced. Thus males will at pairing, or even other times, fight on meeting, one or both dying of wounds then received. I have picked up two large tigers thus grievously injured. Males will sometimes assault young ones of the same sex which may annoy them, or haply only approach too near when the elder is out of temper. The older tigers lie up in the deepest and most inaccessible coverts and are also the first to retreat

to them on observing any suspicious circumstances, such as the pitching of tents, the assembling of elephants, or the collection of any large number of men. Lastly, tigresses having the care of a family will naturally make their lairs where they can, by the near vicinity of villages or cattle-folds, provide easily for themselves and cubs; also, hampered with the latter they cannot, or rather will not, promptly secure their own safety as do the males, whose family affections come in a bad second to a due regard for their own health.

The tiger not only eats carrion, but he prefers his game high, as do in fact many, or I may add, most carnivora; dogs, hog, and even bears will linger fondly over a black and putrid bone. Tigers moreover are cannibals, that is they will eat their own species. I have myself known only one instance, but the following remarkable one was related to me by Mr. S., late of the Bengal Civil Service, a thorough sportsman, and a careful observer:—

S. had killed a tiger and left it lying on the ground, hastening back to his camp, to escape a severe storm of wind and rain, which being over, he despatched his "Shikaree" upon a pad-elephant to fetch in the slain. Shortly after, his servant returned with the report that the tiger had revived, and was lying on his stomach seemingly quite strong; and that observing this from a distance, he had left the other men upon the elephant to watch, while he returned to inform his master. S. having seen the tiger stretched out and apparently lifeless, was not a little surprised as well as incredulous; however, ordering up his howdah-elephant, he proceeded to the spot where he had left his dead tiger, and there and then killed another, which, careless of his approach, was quietly devouring the first! Now these cats being on the same ground, and probably in the same stretch of jungle, must have been acquaintances at least, if not friends or relations. Perhaps never having been formally introduced, they were not on speaking terms; but this cannot justify such an atrocious act of cannibalism.

Tigers when they are hungry, will eat anything they can

find, from clay and earth worms, up to dead elephants, being in this respect also like other carnivora. After man, they prefer beef; after beef, pork; and venison after pork; but they are not gourmets by any means, nor at all fastidious, since, other food failing, they will make a dinner off a young cub of their own, or a half nephew or male cousin.

I have never seen or heard of a black tiger, or of a tiger without stripes; nor can I name with any degree of confidence the extreme limit of age reached in the wild state, but judge it to be from twenty-five to thirty years.

Tigresses have from two to four cubs, three most frequently, I think, and never to my knowledge five at a litter, although I have read of as many being produced at a birth.

Cubs will remain with or near their mother until they are a couple of years old, or even afterwards, if not driven away by violent and unparental treatment on her part, or that of a step-father. At the age of two, the young ones will be big and strong enough to keep house independently, without following their mother, or hanging on her apron strings for advice and guidance; and by that time she will have another family, and be expecting a third. At the age of two, young tigers are quite capable of catering for themselves.

The question is often asked, can a tiger overcome and slay a wild bull buffalo? The answer may be in the affirmative or negative, and yet be equally correct. A bull in the prime and fullest vigour of his life and lusty strength, will ordinarily beat off an average tiger or tigress, but he will be only a fair match for a male tiger of extraordinary size and weight, and victory may rest with one or other, according to certain preliminary or subsequent advantages gained by either in the combat; for instance, if the tiger at his first spring be able to fix himself firmly upon the neck and shoulders of the bull, he will score an important point, which may land him the victor; but if, on the contrary, the bull succeed in hurling his assailant on the ground, and giving him a good prod of his horns, and a stamp of his fore feet, he will ultimately prove the conqueror. A large and powerful tiger will undoubtedly

overcome, in the long run, a bull-buffalo below the average of size and strength.

The night's rest of a friend was completely lost to him by the terrific sounds of battle between a tiger and a wild buffalo close to his tent, and he and his servants were kept awake till dawn, when on search being made, the carcass of a fine bull was found close at hand, much lacerated by fangs and claws ; but the tiger had decamped, no doubt in no plight for a banquet in the close vicinity of a camp.

I remarked some years ago, during a visit to False Point a fine black English bull, which appeared to be permitted to roam at his pleasure day and night over the small open plain on which the lighthouse was built, and which was enclosed by a circle of tree-jungle, infested by tigers, besides many other wild beasts. Expressing my surprise at this freedom allowed the bull, his owner, Mr. G., the lighthouse keeper and port-master, informed me, that in dread of tigers he used at first to secure his valuable bull within a house or enclosure at night, but since witnessing, one afternoon about four o'clock, the utter defeat of a tiger, which had attacked the bull grazing in the open, he felt so confident in the latter's prowess, that he had allowed him to be at large altogether, and the bull had ranged at will unmolested further by tiger or panther. This was an English bull of ordinary size ; and in my opinion no match for an agile and powerful tiger ; accordingly I set down his immunity from other attacks rather to the cowardice of his foes, than to his own strength and powers.





CHAPTER VII.

Tigers and Tiger-shooting—Sport always Uncertain without previous good Intelligence—A large Tiger lost unaccountably—Good Sport dependent on trained and staunch Elephants and “Mahouts”—Patience and Perseverance rewarded—Tigers often found in Families of three or four—Close Shots and clean Misses at three Tigers—An old Native “Shikaree’s” Nerves unstrung—Tigers’ Love of Slaughter—Tigers stalking Cattle—Finding and Death of a furious Tigress—Tigers’ Love of Wandering—A Tigress shot in the midst of a Village.

THERE is no sport more uncertain than tiger-shooting when followed with a line of elephants, on the chance of finding tigers in a beat across country, and without pretty certain intelligence previously obtained of their presence; or when attempted before the grass and reed jungles have been burnt down. Even when such coverts undoubtedly hold tigers, they may not be viewed at all, or if seen for an instant may disappear in a perfectly marvellous manner. In the midst of very tall and rank reeds a tiger may be walking only a few paces ahead of the elephant, whose legs are plainly visible to him, although he himself is never once sighted by the sportsmen in the “howdahs.” Under such circumstances a crafty tiger will frequently outflank the line of elephants by taking a diagonal course, and then, turning back, will get behind his enemy’s line and make off to some secure retreat; or moving rapidly ahead he will take to water to conceal his tracks, and crossing it will lie up in some morass into which the elephants dare not follow him. Not an uncommon stratagem is to slip down into a “nullah” or ravine, and to seek concealment in the thick grass or bushes growing under the overhanging banks where the stream in flood has eaten away the soil; but such artifice will rarely prove successful,

if the sportsmen, knowing their business, will send down one or more of their best and most powerful elephants to beat thoroughly the bed and sides below in line with the rest beating the jungle above. Another cunning trick is to sink the whole of the body and head in water where weeds and lilies grow thickly, and to remain thus perfectly still with only the nose and eyes exposed till the elephants have all passed on, and then, slinking back, to make off at speed.

I have never known an instance of a tiger concealing itself among the branches of a tree when hard pressed; but it seems probable that a light and active animal, if sorely beset among the undergrowth of a grove, such as one of mango trees, would climb into a place of concealment among the foliage of the upper branches; and the finding of tigers upon trees during inundations, as well as on other occasions, is by no means a rare occurrence. Of course if boughs growing low facilitate an ascent, even large and heavy tigers may mount trees occasionally, but without such facilities it is very doubtful whether such beasts could climb a tree at all.

A very cunning tiger may get behind the line of elephants, and follow it if unable to break cover and escape undetected; in short, there is not a wile that may not be practised by one which has been once already hunted and fired at; the sportsman, therefore, should neglect no precautions nor omit to beat thoroughly every patch of covert, no matter how small or insignificant. If a strip of jungle show fresh foot-prints, a recent kill or other sure sign, but no tiger be roused and viewed at the first or even a second beat, let the elephants thrash it out diagonally from side to side, so that the long furrows made by them in the beats from end to end may be crossed by transverse ones, and the ground laid bare; moreover every bunch of grass and every little bush should be trodden down or passed through by one or more elephants; and lastly every drain or little watercourse should be carefully searched.

The close vicinity of a tiger is almost always signalled by a good and experienced elephant, either by a blow on the

ground with the trunk, a forward kick of the fore leg, or a sniff of aversion ; but such signals are sometimes disregarded if a panther, a bear, or even a wild hog have been seen, and a conclusion may be hastily arrived at that some one of those animals had been indicated, and thus a tiger may be lost while a less noble beast is pursued. A few of the best elephants will in this manner acknowledge the presence of the tiger alone ; or of a tiger by signals never wasted upon more ignoble game, so that the sportsman in the "howdah" and the driver on the neck know at once unmistakably what to be prepared to meet.

Patience and perseverance are needed in a pre-eminent degree in this fine sport, patience to bear up against disappointments innumerable, and ill-luck of many blank days in succession ; perseverance in pursuit under all sorts of difficulties and discouragements.

As a general rule a tiger will endeavour to avoid an encounter with a line of elephants ; on rare occasions it will await their approach and charge home when within a few paces, but on still rarer occasions it will advance to the attack from some distance, mouth open, lips curling upwards, ears down, tail on end, and every hair on its body and head bristling with fury. Whoever has had the good fortune to witness such a charge as has been last described, will never forget the magnificent sight, nor the terrific sounds which accompanied the onward bounds of the enraged monster, and filled the air around, drowning the voices of all other living creatures in its awful depth and volume. A large tiger viewed under such circumstances, when his head and body are greatly swelled out, and his appearance rendered most terrific by the bristling of his hair, is a very different creature from the listless, flat-sided beast of menageries and zoological gardens.

It is said that a tiger wounded is almost as good as a tiger padded ; generally no doubt a wounded animal is ultimately killed on favourable ground, especially if badly hit. The temper of this monarch of the Indian jungles is short, and opposed to a long flight in the fiery heat of an April or May

day; but if a painful wound be added it becomes of the shortest, and then an encounter is often courted; but this is by no means to be calculated upon as a certainty, since, strange as it may seem to the inexperienced, even a wounded tiger will often display great want of pluck, and will shun the encounter by the adoption of all sorts of devices.

H. R. and I beat one day, with a dozen elephants, a fine piece of high grass some sixty acres in extent, within a loop of the river Tungun, in the Maldah district. The weather was extremely sultry, and the time about noon, when a waving motion of the grass was noticed just in front of me, which I believed to be caused by a retreating tiger, and accordingly fired, but either missed altogether, or only grazed the animal fired at; at all events no growl answered the shot. Signalling to R. to look out, we moved quickly on ahead, in a good and tolerably compact line, till the end of the loop overhanging steeply the almost dry river was approached, when a very large tiger showing himself to me for an instant, received a bullet which most probably struck him, as he spoke to it, and wheeling to the left broke through the elephants on that flank, my comrade being on the right. Before the tiger got through I obtained a fair view of his head and left side, and again struck him too far back, as he raced past at great speed. Now the line had to go about to head up to the throat of the loop facing the open fields, but before it had proceeded a hundred paces, it was again broken through by the tiger not far from R., who fired a couple of barrels rapidly as his elephant swerved to the charge of the tiger, which going on a score of yards at speed suddenly stopped, and stood up on his hind legs to take a good look at us over the high grass, and in this posture while presenting his broad chest and head to R., was once more fired at by him and then dropped as if mortally wounded. Some of the elephants, alarmed by these rapidly succeeding charges, had clubbed and delayed us, thus losing to us a few precious moments, and a minute or two slipped by before the line was re-formed to beat up again to the end of the loop. We felt so confident

that this beast was severely wounded that we fully expected to pad him where he was seen to drop from his upright attitude ; but no tiger was there, nor a drop of blood either on the grass or the hard dry ground ; accordingly the beat was resumed after a fast elephant had been detached from each flank, to hasten on ahead to the river bank as scouts to watch its sandy bed. This beat too ending without anything more being seen of the object of our pursuit, we returned once more, and thoroughly treading down the jungle quite up to the open country at the neck of the loop, failed to find any traces of the tiger, nor any upon another beat back to the river ; and this surprised and perplexed us the more because the scouts left upon the river bank reported that nothing had been seen to cross it, nor on search being made could fresh foot-prints be detected on the sands below.

We argued that if this tiger had not crossed to the opposite bank, as a sensible and reasonable beast would do, seeing that there lay his safety in the high woods and dense thickets of thorns, he must be lying dead probably in some indentation of the ground, concealed by the matted grass, and overlooked by some careless or unobservant "mahout." Such being the conclusion arrived at, our next act was to set fire to the dry grass on the river side, from whence the brisk west breeze rapidly blew it to the other extremity, reducing all to ashes in a very short space of time. As soon as the earth was sufficiently cooled to be traversed we passed over it, momentarily expecting to come upon the singed carcase of our troublesome friend ; but that day we were doomed to be disappointed, his much decomposed remains not being found till several days subsequently by some villagers, who had gone into the tree coverts on the other bank of the river in search of stray cattle ; so that this crafty beast had after all crossed the river, probably on one of the flanks, after slinking along under the high bank for some distance, and he had without doubt rapidly effected his escape unseen, immediately after he dropped from his erect posture, while we were delayed by the clubbing of our line of elephants.

In this instance, the tiger, a large and powerful male, three or four times fired at, and at least twice severely wounded, as the sequel proved, twice broke the line of elephants, and then bolted clean off, just when he ought, according to the rule before quoted, to have fought and died gallantly. Perhaps the exception proves the rule in this as in other matters.

That beast disturbed my peace of mind till news of his death was brought to our camp, when we were far from the scene of our discomfiture. Of course, we ought to have padded him, and in nine out of ten similar cases we certainly should have done so; but in this instance our failure arose from my shots being a little too far behind in the first instance, and from R.'s aim being disturbed by the conduct of the elephants on the right flank when the tiger made his second charge at and through them. Briefly this fine animal was lost to us by the delay in pushing on rapidly after him when R. fired at his breast over the top of the grass, and seemingly dropped him dead.

There is nothing more vexatious or irritating than such unseasonable misconduct on the part of a few elephants, which may, and often does, create a panic among the remainder, however staunch on ordinary occasions; and the best only can resist the inclination to scream, trumpet, bolt, or club together, the drivers themselves frequently becoming as demoralized as the animals they bestride, and adding to the uproar their own senseless cries and shouts. It is only by the experience of a few such incidents, that one learns to know the true value of one's elephants and "mahouts." Should any elephant be known to be a notorious coward—and many of those belonging to the native landholders are such, from rarely being used for sporting purposes—it is far better to use it to collect fodder in camp, than to run the chance of its communicating to others its timidity and unsteadiness. In many instances, the drivers are at least as much to blame as their charges; and this class of men, being much addicted to the use of opium, are not seldom arrant cowards, who after three or four hours spent in beating dense or thorny coverts during a hot day, lose all

the little nerve they can boast of at the best of times; others there are, and it is but just to them to record their worth, who display the highest courage and perseverance under very trying circumstances, and who will walk their elephants up to the most savage tigers, with the utmost coolness and judgment, if they know that the sportsmen in the "howdahs" behind them can be relied on to shoot straight in all emergencies. As a timid or hesitating rider will make a baulking horse, so a bad shot in the "howdah" will make an over-cautious "mahout" and a backward elephant in a scrimmage. It is incumbent, therefore, on the captain of the beat to ascertain the characters of his elephants, and to eliminate such as are likely to throw his line into disorder by excessive nervousness or habitual vice. Some elephants will start and run from a hare; others on entering a covert, will endeavour to throw off their pads and riders; and not a few at the first growl of a tiger, or the first report of a rifle, will make off homewards at best pace, regardless of all in their way. Of all these bad and vicious brutes, the last are the worst, as many a sportsman can bear witness.

I have never known another instance of a tiger rearing upright on his hind legs to command a view over the jungle; bears do so frequently; but it is a common practice of most animals, on being suddenly alarmed and roused, to run when practicable out of covert, in order that they may see clearly what has disturbed them from their lairs. R. had a very distinct and a close view of the upstanding tiger, and both, it seems, were equally astonished at what they then saw.

As an example of patience and perseverance, the following may serve young sportsmen. We were a party of four "howdahs" and a score of elephants in all, under the leadership of the late R. C. of the B. C. S., than whom a more enthusiastic and thorough-going sportsman never handled spear or gun, who always insisted on a strict observance of his rules in beating for tigers, under penalty of a return alone to camp on the part of any transgressor. C.'s style of beating was perfect, nor would he permit a shot to be fired,

except at a tiger, until the line he commanded turned back to and was near camp.

We had thoroughly explored the high grass jungles on the main land, as well as on the "churs," or islets of the Jumooona river from Ghabsara, a dozen miles north of Serajgunge, in the Pubna district, to a point opposite the little out-factory of Juggernautgunge in Mymensingh, having secured only four tigers in five days, our luck being somewhat poor for those days, with which however the rank and unburnt grass had much to do, this party having been made up for early March in order that certain holidays occurring then might not be altogether wasted in the ordinary amusements of a small station. We crossed the Jumooona opposite the indigo factory above named, very nearly losing one of our elephants, a foolish beast, which after swimming the broad stream with its companions, refused to mount the high sandy bank when it struck land, and preferred to recross, and so went miles down the river before the "mahout," standing upon her bare back, and navigating her with the aid of a bamboo stick, succeeded in turning her head to shore, and ultimately landing her safely, but in a much exhausted condition.

The report of a tigress being close at hand met us on our arrival at the factory, the Gomashtah of which in confirmation adding the statement that she had been in the jungle where she now was for a week or more, showing herself frequently morning and evening to the herdsmen of the neighbourhood. Accordingly we turned into our camp-beds that night, in the full expectation of adding her to our bag on the morrow.

We mounted our howdahs about nine o'clock the following morning, and were soon near the tigress's present lair, less than a mile from camp. Not a shot had we fired the two preceding days, our leader permitting no shooting at miscellaneous game in jungles where the presence of tigers was known, as in those beaten on the other bank, in which we had frequently come upon the bones of men and animals, the former beyond doubt those of boatmen pounced upon while

towing up stream, whose fate would never be known beyond the limits of their native villages. In this manner many lives are lost every year, and never reported, the numbers of human beings destroyed annually by tigers and panthers, as shown by the official returns, being greatly exceeded by the actual casualties.

The jungle now before us was a long strip of high grass, growing in bunches, much traversed by cattle paths. In length some eight hundred yards from east to west by two hundred in breadth, it was divided into three nearly equal parts, by two straight paths crossing it from side to side, rendering the beating comparatively easy, since, by placing a scouting elephant or two at the end of each alley, we could make sure whether the tigress had or had not passed on. On the north was a small piece of water with marshy borders overgrown with rushes, wild cardamom, and wild rose-bushes, full of wild hog, the country around being open, and most excellent for hunting them. Numerous footprints of the tigress upon the mud of the morass, and the half-eaten carcase of a sow recently killed, proved that her ladyship was "at home;" but although beaten up and down, and afterwards diagonally piece by piece, the grass was drawn blank, as was also the swamp on the north, out of which we drove several sounders of hog. We returned to camp about one o'clock without firing a shot, vexed and disappointed at the ill-luck which clung to us.

The next day the elephants were not mounted till noon, as we waited for some report of a kill being brought us; but none coming in we sallied forth at that hour, and till three o'clock beat patches of thatching grass, mixed with wild roses, on the skirts of the long grass jungle searched the day before, finding only wild hog, hares, "kya," partridges, and quail in abundance, which of course was not fired at at all. Once more the marshy grass was entered and thoroughly explored bit by bit, the previous trampling having rendered our labour much lighter. The appearance of the covert was of course greatly changed by the passages of a score of

elephants through it several times, and this day we found cattle and sheep quietly grazing in it, tended by two or three herdsmen, who squatted on the paths and lazily watched their charges, indifferent to all danger from tiger or boar. Briefly, we beat the covert from end to end without a "sign" of a tiger, till the second time, when we came upon part of the skin of a sheep just killed, and shortly after one of our party declared that he had seen the tail of a tiger disappear rapidly in the grass in front of him, but as he had not fired this statement was received with some doubt and suspicion, much to his indignation. However, we had now got something on which to build hopes of success; accordingly we toiled till near sunset without a view, and had reached nearly the upper end of the grass in the course of our last beat without success. The crimson disc of the sun was now touching the horizon beyond the waters of the river, flooding all objects around us in a soft yellow light, and rendering the shadows darker and dimmer every minute as we neared for the last time the end of the covert, when something glided ahead between the roots of the thick bunches of grass, and crouching low disappeared swiftly in the gloom. One elephant was, as usual, on the very verge of the jungle on our extreme left; next to it was one with a "howdah," and between it and me two more pad animals, while, on my right, two other "howdahs" and a dozen pads completed the line, which was on the point of wheeling to the right when I detected the tigress's low undulating form creeping ahead, and quickly fired. The occupant of the "howdah," on my left, an excellent shot, had also seen her, and fired at the same instant, our two barrels ringing out almost as one, and both bullets hit; for up rose the tigress on her hind legs, and made at us open-mouthed, growling most savagely. Again our rifles spoke, and two bullets entering her broad white chest brought her to the ground writhing in her death throes.

The end was sudden and startling, as all before it had been dull and wearisome after the first beat; accordingly the success which crowned our toils was none the less acceptable,

nor did any of us forget that lesson of patience and perseverance ultimately rewarded so satisfactorily to all concerned. Our leader, to whose experience and pertinacity was mainly due this successful termination of our labours, must have felt gratified at such an example of his doctrines.

This tigress measured nine feet three inches, and would in a few days more have given birth to four cubs, two of each sex. She had most certainly been in that grass covert all that day and the previous day, creeping now before the line, now after it; crouching low upon the ground, wheeling when we wheeled, and taking advantage of every tuft and bunch of high grass to conceal her movements; always silent, crafty, and untiring. Long before the death the covert had been completely trampled down, so that our eyes could search through it everywhere. It is, then, wonderful how she contrived to move about unseen, except that time when our comrade saw her tail; nor, strange to add, had the elephants once signalled her presence. Had our friend fired rapidly ahead when he detected her tail disappearing in the jungle she would most probably have been slain three hours sooner, since, even if his bullet missed her, the shot would have startled her into some movement which would have betrayed to us her near presence.

The week's trip ended with a total bag of five tigers only, shot on three different days, the time it was undertaken being too early in the season, and before fire had cleared away the rankest coverts. The following month (April) a similar party padded sixteen tigers in a fortnight or three weeks in the country a little further north, about Dewangunge, on both banks of the river, as high up as Singamari and Chilmari. I have known thirty-six to be shot in the month between Dewangunge and Dubri by a party of men who knew how to handle the spear and rifle equally well, and who slew many a good boar besides the above tale of tigers during the trip alluded to here.

Many tigers are missed through the hasty conclusion arrived at by some sportsmen that one being killed in the

jungle, there is no other left in it, and that to continue the search would be both time and labour wasted. Experience proves that a second or even a third beat after the death of one tiger will often result in a very gratifying addition to the day's bag. Time after time, when a report has been brought that a tiger or tigress had been marked down in a certain place, I have found two or three. This animal is not the unsociable creature it is commonly understood to be; on the contrary, it is fond of consorting with others, and not seldom three or four may be found together; a mother and nearly full grown cubs; both parents and half-grown ones, or a charming party of young males and females living and hunting together for a considerable length of time.

It is truly a grand sight to see four brindled beauties spring up together out of the same small patch of grass, and go bounding over it, heads and tails well up. When a number are thus roused together, coolness and steadiness are essential to the successful padding of all, since "Mahouts" and elephants, not to mention the sportsmen, are apt to become excited on seeing three or four when only one was expected.

One morning after parade I beat up a patch of exceedingly strong and tall reeds near my lines at Telain, in Cachar, in which a tiger was said to have been marked down; instead of one four were put up, all full grown beauties. On another occasion, having gone to shoot a tiger which had killed an ox tied up the night before, no less than three rose off the carcass, and all were slain in less than a quarter of an hour.

The following incident furnishes an example of unexpected good fortune not availed of by those to whom it presented itself. A pony having been killed by a tiger in the old Hill station of Cherra Poonjee, some officers of the Sylhet Light Infantry (now the 44th N. I.) proceeded to the ruins of an old bungalow, out of a broken window of which they watched the "kill" a little before sunset. Shortly afterwards three full-grown tigers crept up together from the valley immediately below the ruins, and at once making for the carcass commenced eating it not twenty paces from the concealed rifle-

men, who contrived to let all three escape seemingly untouched!

This took place within a bowshot of my house during my absence from home, and the colonel who was my informant, explained that the surprise occasioned by the near proximity of three such creatures when only one was expected, must have caused three fairly good shots to make such a fiasco of so splendid a chance. Be that as it may the tigers came not again, and no wonder if four to six barrels were discharged at them.

If the unexpected appearance of a tiger will unnerve even some old "Shikarees," can it be surprising that solitary travellers along lonely jungle paths are entirely paralysed at meeting face to face this fearful animal?

My young friend, W. M., mounted his "machan" one bright moonlight night about nine o'clock, to watch for sambur over a salt-lick among the foot-hills of Pareesnath, not far from Topechansi. As a man-eating tiger had been infesting that neighbourhood and carrying away people from even the trunk road between the place above named and Mimsaghat, M. sensibly adopted the precaution of being accompanied by a number of men, some carrying torches, in his walk from camp to the spot selected for night-watch, all of whom he dismissed on mounting the platform, except an experienced old Mahomedan "Shikaree," who was to be his companion. They had hardly arranged the guns and rifles, and settled themselves to their satisfaction, when M. remarked that something agitated his attendant, who, lightly touching his back, whispered in Hindoostanee the caution, "Look, sir." M., however, could perceive nothing, although he peered among the rocks and bushes which thinly strewn the ground around and in front of the "machan," while the beams of the moon, near its full, made all objects clear and distinct when not in the shadow of a tree or boulder. A moment passed, and then the "Look, sir" of the "Shikaree" was repeated, and a trembling hand pointed to the front. "Look at what?" asked M. sharply, annoyed with the old man; "cannot you speak?" The former

caution was all the answer received by M., and the shaking hand directed his attention to a mass of rocks on which the moonbeams shone brightly, but among the shadows of which his straining eyes could detect nothing remarkable. M. informed me that at this moment the platform shook with the trembling of his attendant, whom he again questioned angrily as to what he was to look at, but the only reply was the shaking finger of the shivering wretch pointing over his shoulder to the front while he shook as if in an ague fit and his parched tongue refused the utterance of a word. Something which M. had taken to be a piece of white quartz rock now moved and fell, and again rising appeared to approach very slowly till within twenty paces, and then a long shadowy form crouched close to the earth, where the crisp moonlight cast the shadow of a bush, having crept up without disturbing a pebble or crunching a dry leaf or twig in its silent advance. M. now distinctly made out the outlines of an immense tiger, but hesitated to fire in the uncertain light at so great a distance. Presently the tiger rose and from the distance of a dozen or fifteen yards flung himself at the "machan" with a deep and murderous growl. "Now or never," thought M., as he fired the right barrel of his heavy rifle at the tiger's head. The shot told, and the wounded monster, springing up on his hind legs, bounded aside with a roar of pain and anger, and on receiving the fire of the other barrel leapt into some bushes and bamboos from which groans and hoarse gurgling sounds were heard for some time. M. made sure that he had secured his game, although unable to reach him as he then lay protected from his fire, nor did he feel disposed to descend to make a closer inspection. By and by the tiger was heard to stagger on till he reached a thick clump of bamboos, and then no more was heard or seen of him till M. came off his perch at daylight and was rejoined by his followers, rejoicing in the anticipation of a good meal of sambur venison.

An examination of the ground in front of the platform being then made, a fragment of the lower jaw and a portion of the upper lip of the tiger were picked up, and a good deal of

blood was found where he lay groaning for some minutes before making off into the heavy covert, but his body, though sought for, was never found, and he died probably in some favourite lair at a distance from the spot where his wound or wounds had been received, and with him disappeared forever the Topechansi man-eater.

M. missed bagging this fine tiger by just an inch. The rifle bullet struck the animal above the nostrils and broke both upper and lower jaws, carrying away a portion of the cheek and lips; had the elevation been an inch higher it would have entered the upper part of the head, and by its great size, five or six to the pound, have completely fractured the skull. It is probable that the second bullet, fired as he leapt into the bushes, also struck him, as much blood was left where he had laid down and groaned grievously as if shot through the lungs.

The conduct of the old "Shikaree" as has been above described, was unusual in a seasoned hand. Further it may be noted that although he detected the tiger crouching among the rocks, and pointed towards him his shaking hand, he would not pronounce the name of the dreaded beast; and this objection is not uncommon among certain classes of the natives who live near or frequent jungles infested by tigers.

It seems likely that this tiger came to the salt-lick a little before him, and on the same errand, viz., to watch for a sambur, and, startled by the number of his attendants, and by the torches carried by them, had crouched low to conceal himself, until the departure of his followers would give him a better chance of a successful attack, and an exchange of venison for human flesh for supper.

The propensity to kill through caprice, or pure love of mischief, is largely developed in some tigers, more so in the young than in the old ones; even confirmed man-eaters will now and then exhibit this bloodthirsty trait, as did a pair near Bhoyrub Bazaar, in the "Mymensingh" district, which, after carrying off and devouring two men and a woman in the course of forty-eight hours, killed a score or more wild-

hog, seemingly through sheer love of destruction, since the carcasses lay uneaten as struck down in the same covert which concealed the remains of the human victims.

I have known a young tigress, not arrived at full growth, to kill five head of cattle in the afternoon, and to eat during the night following only the hind quarters of one, the rest being left untouched after the blows of her paws, and the weight of her body cast upon their necks and shoulders had dislocated the former ; nor had she sucked the blood of a single one from the throat—a practice not common with either the tiger or the panther, so far as my experience teaches, both cats, as a rule, preferring to make the first meal of the heart, liver, and hind quarters. Although the throat is often found to be lacerated or punctured by the tiger's fangs, I cannot recall a single instance where the blood of the victim appeared to have been sucked from a wound opened at the throat. Like other animals, great and small, which seize live prey, the tiger and the panther will not unfrequently continue its hold of the throat till life is extinct, and this custom may give rise to the general belief in the blood-sucking habit of these animals. I would not be understood to assert that blood is never sucked from the jugular, since, doubtless, it is sometimes, as when the animal is very thirsty, and slakes its thirst with the blood before proceeding to eat the flesh of its prey.

The tactics and manœuvres of a tiger bent on converting into beef one or more of a herd of cattle, prior to the final attack, are most interesting, and the stupidity displayed by the cattle is sometimes astonishing. The tyrant of the jungle, seated in the shade, will sometimes watch complacently for a considerable time the movements of the herd, which he clearly considers his own property, with the calm and deliberate air of a sleek grazier selecting the individuals best suited for his present purpose ; or, assuming an indifferent air, will walk gravely and thoughtfully along the covert side, seemingly occupied with thoughts in no way connected with the grazing herd in the open ; even indulging in a comforting roll in the sandy soil to rid himself of ticks and other para-

sites, but all the time keeping an eye on the business in hand, and steadily approaching the point from which he has resolved to make his attack. Meanwhile, as long as their enemy is at some distance, the lazy oxen may take no notice of him beyond a stupid stare, or the cocking of the ears and tails of those on the skirts of the herd, who will, perhaps, slowly close upon the main body. Finally, when the attack is made upon them, with the swiftness of a lightning flash, the herd will scatter over the plain in all directions, leaving two or three of their number struck down, and the last in the grasp of their remorseless foe. The tiger's tactics are very different when he purposes to take one of a herd of buffaloes, on whom a direct and open attack is more than he dares to make, since these powerful beasts will not hesitate to bear down upon him in a body, should his skulking approach be seen or scented. I once had an opportunity of observing the proceedings of a brace of tigers bent upon killing one of a large herd of the savage and bulky half-wild buffaloes of Eastern Bengal. It was while riding over an extensive "chur" in the Noakholly district, on which large herds of buffaloes grazed all the year round among the tamarisk bushes. A little before sunset a pair of tigers, after carefully reconnoitring the ground from the cover of the jungle, adopted the plan now to be related to get possession of one of a considerable herd, which they durst not attack openly. The female, lithe and active, leaving her lusty lord crouched in concealment, made a circuit under cover, and getting to windward of the grazing herd, showed herself at a point opposite to that where her mate lay hidden, and, as she intended, was soon seen and scented by the buffaloes nearest to her. At first the herd, throwing up their heads angrily, snuffed the air, slowly advancing a few paces; then, as they clearly made out the shirking form of their detested foe in their covert side, with one accord they closed upon the leaders with loud snorts and bellows, and in an irresistible phalanx bore down at speed upon her. The tigress now made off with long and rapid bounds, while the tiger, advancing from the rear, fell upon and struck down a weak and sickly young

cow, who, gazing after her charging companions, was felled to the ground before she was aware of any danger. Having secured his supper, the tiger retired into the jungle till night-fall, when he and his mate returned to share it in peace and quiet. I had the pleasure to add this tigress shortly afterwards to my list of game shot in that district, but her mate eluded me.

When a tiger has been foiled in its attack, or has been driven off the prey it had seized, it often becomes most furious, and fights desperately. I have not frequently remarked the same in defence of cubs, but on the contrary, have observed that the mother appeared chiefly concerned in taking off her young to some place of security unseen by those in pursuit.

We were out once enjoying glorious sport and making a grand bag of big game in the Goalpara district, and had come to our last day of that trip, when about noon intelligence was brought by some herdsmen of a tigress being close at hand in a jungle into which she had retreated on being driven off an ox she had seized. The covert, consisting of close-growing grass higher than the elephants, was a long, narrow strip of about half a mile, with open fields on both sides, and a still heavier and more extensive jungle at the further end beyond an open space of a few acres. The tigress was said to be lying at the upper end, which, accordingly, was entered by our line of seventeen elephants and two howdahs, while J. and I, mounted upon two steady and staunch beasts, going ahead a few hundred paces, took up positions opposite each other at points commanding openings in the heavy grass, and there silently waited the advance of the line of beaters, ready to fire in case the tiger retreated before them. When the line had approached close to us, a tigress passed me rapidly, crouching along the ground between the roots of the tall grass, which, growing in bunches, offered an easy passage below for animals, while the rank and intermingled leaves above completely screened their movements from those in the howdahs who followed her. Obtaining a bare glimpse, I fired

a quick snap shot, hitting the tigress in the loins, as afterwards was proved, but inflicting only a flesh wound of no severity, and only calculated to aggravate a temper already arrived at boiling point. Acknowledging the shot with a savage growl the tigress passed on, rendering it necessary for J. and myself to push on ahead again promptly, to cut off her retreat, and this we did at our best pace outside the cover, and took up new positions three or four hundred yards in advance of the last.

I had B. in the "khawas," or after-seat of my "howdah," as, feeling unwell, he had exchanged places with my long-legged Sikh orderly, the latter mounting the pad on B.'s little female elephant, from which it was his custom and choice to shoot in preference to a "howdah," the animal being a particularly easy and staunch one, and her driver one of the very best in Assam.

When the line had advanced about half-way between our last and present positions, a terrible uproar commenced. W. and F. were in howdahs, near the two flanks of their line, which had advanced thus far without any incident; but now up sprang the tigress, and bounded upon the elephants, clawing the shoulder of one, biting the hind leg of another, and uttering all the time hoarse, guttural sounds terrible to hear, and utterly demoralising both elephants and "Mahouts"; finally, she seized B.'s pet mount by the head and brought her down on her knees, knocking the driver off on one side, and my orderly on the other, and to her the tigress clung tooth and nail for some moments.

By this time the beating line was utterly broken and routed; some elephants were already flying across the open, others, clubbed together, were screaming and trumpeting in the utmost alarm, and quite beyond the control of their drivers, whose opium-sodden nerves were wholly unequal to emergencies of this sort. W.'s elephant had naturally become unsteady in the midst of the confusion, while F.'s was in full flight; accordingly for some minutes the tigress was mistress of the situation, and not a shot was fired at her.

In the midst of this uproar J. and I were compelled to remain inactive at our posts, it being our duty to prevent the tigress from passing us undetected; but when a cry was raised that B.'s "Mahout" was being carried off, we advanced into the centre of the jungle where the elephant had been pulled down, and presently observed the grass before me waving violently. Believing that the man was really being dragged away, I forbore to fire until I saw some part of the brindled skin, lest I should strike the man, and therefore my elephant was pushed on as fast as possible, while I leaned forward with finger on trigger, prepared to fire as soon as I got a view. While thus peering eagerly a-head of me, I received a shock which almost threw me out of the "howdah," as the tigress, springing upon the "mukna's" head with a growl like the roll of thunder, nearly brought him to his knees; but here she had met more than her match, for the gallant old hero, shaking her off, administered a kick with one of his forelegs which flung her some yards before him into the thick grass. Before I could recover my standing position to fire, the infuriated tigress, turning upon J.'s elephant, seized her hind leg with her fangs, burying them in the flesh, while with her claws she deeply scored the poor beast's hams. This attack giving me an opening, I put a bullet into the tigress's ribs, which caused her to relinquish her hold and charge the few remaining pad elephants, and chase all but one clear out of the jungle.

After this, my own, J.'s, and a very large old pad elephant belonging to the Commissariat Department, were the only ones left in the field; some were flying across country, others were clubbed with heads together, piping and trumpeting with rage and fear; B.'s little elephant stood in the fields with drooping ears and bleeding head, at a loss to understand why her Mahout had deserted, and the meaning of the uproar around, and her own wounds. F. was a speck on the horizon; and lastly W.'s elephant, usually a steady matronly creature, was in full flight at her very best pace. It was W.'s custom to have with him always a fast elephant,

whose driver carrying a long spear in hand, prodded behind the portly and somewhat slow dame which carried him that day. Now the "Mahout" of the attendant beast having lost his head completely through terror and excitement, instead of assisting to pacify the other, was seen by us prodding her unmercifully, shouting and yelling at the same time, and turning what otherwise would have proved a temporary disorder of her nerves into mad fear, as the prods received behind must have appeared to her the bites and clawings of a pursuing tiger; meanwhile W.'s hands and arms were flying about the head of his own Mahout, who had lost control of his charge, and what with excitement and alarm, and the stimulants, both vocal and manual, administered by his master, was barely able to retain his seat.

The Sikh orderly who had escaped into the open without his pugree, now that he was in safety, stood enjoying the row, as his gleaming teeth showed, and it was he who in his flight through the tall grass had caused the latter to shake and move, and not, as believed at the moment, the tigress carrying off B.'s "Mahout," whom we picked up dazed, and stupid with terror, but beyond a scratch or two free from wounds. This man remained almost speechless for several days, and had to take leave for the recovery of his health, returning ultimately in sound condition, but always bemoaning the loss of the coloured rag he called his "pugree," which the tigress had apparently clawed off his head on this memorable occasion.

J. and I, left with a solitary pad elephant (honourably mentioned above), had our work cut out for us, and a furious tigress before us, wounded more or less severely. Keeping the tall pad elephant between us, we beat the covert slowly and thoroughly, keeping a bright look out ahead, and our fingers on the triggers of our rifles, momentarily expecting another desperate charge, and yet fearing that she might escape out at the farther end into the heavier coverts beyond that we were beating. There was no need however to feel any apprehensions on this score, for crouching close till we

passed without seeing her, the indomitable creature sprang upon my elephant's rump, and seizing the corner of the pad under the "howdah" with her teeth, began to claw at B.'s legs, which showed through the cane-work of the "khawas." Before J. could range up alongside, I contrived to dislodge her by firing into her face with my rifle held pistol fashion, while I clung on with the left hand. Although I leaned well over, and almost touched the tigress with the rifle muzzle, she dropped without receiving more than a flesh wound under the skin of her cheek and neck, and at once fixed herself upon the big commissariat elephant, and took a full taste of his hind quarters, receiving during the operation, another bullet from my rifle, which caused her to drop and vanish.

We saw no more of her till we had turned from the end of the grass, and had reached the spot where the last scrimmage took place, and then it was my good luck to view her as she crawled forward on her belly, preparatory to another spring upon the old "mukna's" head, but a quickly fired bullet struck her between the eyes, rolled her stone dead on her side, and ended as pretty a little bit of sport as can be had in that particular line. She was a sturdy tigress, in the early prime of life, and measured an inch under nine feet in length. She held a bit of my pad in her mouth up to the last, and gave it a savage bite with her last gasp. *Requiescat in pace*; she was a gallant beast, though somewhat short in temper; it is a pity there are not more like her in this weary world, to cast upon it now and then a gleam of joy and brightness.

Tigers are in the habit of wandering over considerable distances, in search of prey or fresh quarters. The very distinguished family of man-eaters at Prannugger, in Dinage-poor, had a range of twelve or fifteen miles from the above named village, which they depopulated, to some distance north of Thakoorgaon, the breadth of their hunting country being somewhat less. It was the custom of this amiable family, whether singly or in twos and threes, to change quarters every time they killed, and to remain away three,

four or five days from the scene of their last exploit. These tigers not only killed or drove away every inhabitant of Prannugger, but they closed for years about six miles of the high road to Thakoorgaon, compelling travellers, even in the day time, to make a detour by the open plain one side or the other.

In their nightly wanderings, tigers will stray sometimes into the most unlikely places, as the middle of a station, a bazaar, or a house in the midst of a large village; surprised by daylight, when far away from their usual retreats, they rarely display any desire for mischief and slaughter, and if unmolested, will gently settle down in a field of grain, a drain well covered with thorns or grass, or the bush-lined banks of a tank, till nightfall again allows them to depart unseen, except peradventure by the watchful village curs.

Sitting at tiffin one Sunday, when our Chaplain chanced to be our guest, in the course of one of his quarterly visitations to Noakholly, we received intelligence of a "bagh" being in the middle of a large village across the river. The Padre was the only one disposed to accompany me, and reluctantly abandoned the adventure, on my expressing my inability to guarantee his return in good time for the evening service; accordingly I rode out alone, expecting to find a panther only, that animal being somewhat common around the station. On reaching a considerable village four miles away, to which my guides led me, it was seen to be quite deserted by its inhabitants, who were all out in the fields, in much alarm and excitement.

The "bagh" when first observed early that morning, was quietly stalking over the open ground, but on being shouted at, and annoyed by the barking of the village curs, had turned into the village, attracted by the thick groves of bamboos, cocoa, and areca nut trees, which in that district invariably surround and shade the homesteads of the people; and then bewildered by the endless houses and gardens, it had squatted down in the very centre, frightening the inhabitants out of their houses.

Mounted upon a galloway, a double gun in hand, and followed by my orderly, the trusty Doolap, similarly armed, I entered the village, after some conversation with the people, guided by one of them who professed to know exactly where the "bagh" lay. When we had gained about the centre of the village, and were proceeding silently along one of its many paths, my eye fell upon a crouching form, and I became aware that it was no panther, but a veritable tiger with which I had to deal. The creature was lying at full length in the deep shade of some bamboos, in what was in the rainy season a shallow water-hole, but was then, in March, only a dip in the ground, and quite dry. As I rode up, partially concealed by bushes, and the tiger hidden almost by rank weeds, I had almost passed, when our eyes met, and I knew that there was no time to be lost, unless I ceded to him the initiative, or I should say "to her," for my foe proved to be of the gentler sex.

Pulling up, and dismounting promptly, I sent away my pony and guide, and advanced cautiously a few paces to my left, followed by my gun bearer, who stuck to me closely, but although not three paces apart, I could see nothing of her now I was on the ground. A couple of yards nearer to her grew a mango sapling to which we moved up, and observing low down its trunk a forking branch, I put my left foot upon it, and rising about two feet off the ground, obtained again a view of the tigress's head and right shoulder, as she lay gathered up ready to spring upon me.

There was indeed no time to be lost, for if she made her attack before I fired, I was completely at her mercy, hanging as I was in a manner to the tree by my left hand and foot. Quickly raising my gun pistol-fashion in my right hand, and resting it lightly on my right leg and foot, I took aim at her neck, hoping to kill her at once by hitting her spine, and pressed the trigger. There was at the time half a gale of wind blowing from the south, which caused the sapling to bend and sway, and somewhat disconcert my aim, on the trueness of which my life depended at that moment. I

missed the neck, therefore, and hit her well forward upon her shoulder, a mortal wound, but not such as to disable her instantly. The report of my gun was echoed by a terrific roar of rage and pain, and the tigress at one bound alighted on my right, grazing my right thigh ; then, rearing upon her hind legs, she was about to seize me with her teeth, when my plucky follower discharged both barrels of the second gun slap into her face, and dodged aside. With another frightful growl the tigress bounded on, striking out with her left paw and arm, the right hanging broken and disabled, blinded by the flash and smoke close to her eyes. In this manner she dashed on a short distance, and then turning, she crouched as if contemplating a second attack, but before it could be delivered, I stepped down upon the ground and put one last remaining bullet into the centre of the broad, white breast, exposed to my aim at a distance of thirty yards, and rolled her over, gasping and struggling in the death throes ; a few minutes more, and her limbs were straightened out and she gave up the ghost.

I attribute my escape unscathed in this instance to two circumstances under Providence ; first, that the tigress's right shoulder was so completely smashed, that she was unable to strike me with it on alighting on my right ; and next, the courageous behaviour of Doolap, who by firing into her face, blinded and so disconcerted her as to prevent her from seizing me with her teeth, as she most assuredly would have done. Had Doolap bolted, as nineteen out of twenty men of his kind would have done, my shooting days had ended then. Strange as it may appear, both barrels fired by my gunbearer missed clean, for although almost touching her face, the latter had not a scratch upon it.

This was a slim young tigress, nine feet in length, wearing a bright sleek skin. She had wandered away seven or eight miles from any heavy coverts, and was on a grand tour when daylight surprised her in the open country. She was one of a family of five, of which I had already accounted for the mother, a brother, and a sister ; the sire alone remaining.

But for the strong breeze disturbing my aim through the swaying of the sapling, I should in all probability have broken her neck and killed her on the spot; however, I had reason to be satisfied with the termination of this adventure, as were also the villagers; but Doolap, the trusty, looked glum, never being able to give any account of those two bits of lead which he let fly into the tigress's face.

A native saying is, that whereas a deer can leap twenty cubits, a tiger leaps twenty-one. On the occasion above recorded, the distance between the root of the tree to which I clung and the tigress's "form" was exactly eight paces, say twenty and a-half feet, a fair standing jump for her to make with a ball in her shoulder, and from a lower to a higher elevation. She seemed to have missed my body in her spring, and unable to strike me down with the disabled arm next to me, to have reared up with the intention of seizing me with her teeth.





CHAPTER VIII.

Tigers and Tiger-shooting—Pursuit and Destruction of a notorious Man-eater—Native Ideas on the subject of Claims upon Europeans—Attempted Extortions—Our Courts admirably adapted to meet the fondness of Natives for protracted Litigation and vindictive Prosecutions.

I WAS a "Griff," and had not yet seen a tiger, when an invitation came from a friend, who was the Salt Agent of Chittagong, to try my "prentice-hand" upon a tigress, which was playing havoc with the salt manufacture of one of his "Arungs." It appeared that for three months previously she had taken up her quarters in that locality, and had killed, wounded, or carried off sixty "Molunghees" and fuel-cutters; also, that the local "Shikarees" who had failed to track and destroy her, had lost heart and had given her up as an enchanted demon, quite beyond their powers of destruction. Consequently such a terror had been established, that men could not be induced to go out to cut and fetch in fuel to keep up the fires for boiling down the brine. It may be presumed also that the European residents were at that particular period no more sportsmen than was my friend the agent; or that they had neither the time nor the inclination for a pursuit, which might be long and tedious as well as ineffectual. However that may be, the man-eater lived, killed, and ate, and the salt manufacture dwindled down to next to nothing in the "Arung" selected by her as the field of her depredations.

It has been stated that I was a "Griff" then, but in addition to total inexperience, the firearms I owned, though good in themselves, were not quite what they should be with

which to meet tigers on foot ; however, I had devoured every book on Indian sport on which I could lay hands, and had stored up in my mind numerous means and artifices by which these animals were to be found and overcome ; furthermore, so enthusiastic was I on the subject of sport of every kind, that when not thinking, reading, or talking about it by day, I dreamt of it at night ; hog-hunting being the favourite theme waking or sleeping.

Accordingly the invitation given was promptly accepted and acted upon, so that in less than a week after its receipt I was upon the field of my future triumph or discomfiture. The first intelligence gathered was not encouraging, it being reported that for a week prior to my arrival the tigress had not been heard of, and the hope was expressed that she had gone off elsewhere, where the inhabitants, ignorant of her wiles and ferocity, were less cautious than those she left behind her.

I met and conversed with a man who had been rescued from her fangs with the loss of an arm ; and as well as I could ascertain from a somewhat rambling and incoherent statement, it appeared that a month or six weeks before, he was walking at the edge of the jungle in the early morning, in company with two or three others whose business was to cut firewood ; they were conversing as they proceeded onwards without thought of any danger, since there was no heavy covert near, and the man was standing for an instant to point out something to his companions, when with a low growl the tigress was upon him, springing from a bunch of grass hardly capable of hiding a hare, and he was seized by the shoulder, into which was buried one of her upper fangs, while her huge widespread paws clasped him in an iron grip. My informant further stated, that on first being seized he was not conscious of any great pain, and he supposed, rightly, no doubt, that he fainted ; however, when he recovered his senses, he felt himself being dragged by the arm through bushes and thorns, the tigress uttering low angry growls, seemingly in answer to the loud shouts raised by his

companions. Shortly after this she stopped and lay down beside him, as with the intention of then and there making a meal, but did not worry or otherwise injure his body; presently the shouts increasing and approaching nearer, she stood up snarling savagely, advanced a pace or two, and then with a sulky grunt bounded off leaving him on the ground, from which he was raised and carried away by a number of men, who hearing cries had quickly left their work and joined his companions in following up the tigress.

This was as close a shave as a man could well have, and reminds me of a similar one in which a friend in the Madras Presidency acted a prominent and leading part next to the tiger, which seized and dragged him into a thicket a considerable distance, and then suddenly disappeared, leaving him sorely mauled. In both instances the escapes with life were most providential.

Another man who had been knocked over only, and not seized, related his story also, but it only amounted to the fact of his being struck down by a blow on his back when working with his fellows, who combined to drive the tigress off by shouts and threats; others who had been wounded and escaped with their lives had left for their homes.

Of late the tigress had taken to attacking men at night while at work in the boiling-houses, or while eating or smoking in small knots within the fences constructed for defence against wild beasts. These defences had consequently been raised and strengthened, nevertheless this demon had sprung over through the top of one of these, and had carried off a man out of a dozen, who one night were seated round a fire smoking and conversing in fancied security. In this instance the fence was built of saplings seven or eight feet high, bound roughly but strongly together after being driven deep into the earth, and closely filled in with reeds and grass, altogether a good and strong stockade although not quite high enough, as the tigress proved by leaping over or through the bending tops, and carrying off her victim in the same way with as much ease as a cat would run off

with a rat or a small bird. It was this last feat which had caused the most serious panic, and driven the people from their work.

I had brought with me an experienced Christian "Shikaree," a steady and bold man, with fair ability at tracking, whose real name was a high-sounding one of Portuguese nobility, but who answered to the more humble one of "Doolap." My follower was one of some hundreds who lived in those parts, Coelhos, Albuquerque, Rodriques, D'Souzas &c.; left-handed descendants of Portuguese adventurers of the seventeenth century—some pirates, others fair traders, and not a few something between the two as occasion or temptation made them. Doolap, although a Portuguese nobleman by descent, was as black as any Bengalee of those parts, and resembled them in dress, as well as his style of living and language, and except that his features were somewhat dissimilar, and his build sturdier, might well be taken for any ordinary Bengalee villager of the country. As for religion Doolap was of course a Roman Catholic, but one without prejudices, and indeed without any knowledge of his creed beyond that of certain duties to his priesthood, and some proper observances at the chapel he attended once or twice a year, without understanding much the ceremonies performed therein.

In addition to the above-named henchman, I had enlisted the services and attendance of a local "Shikaree," a Mussulman, whose wide mouth and lantern jaws were garnished with thin white moustaches and a goatee beard, giving him with his coal-black face the semblance of a patriarchal "lungoar." My new esquire looked sixty, though less by ten years than that age, and was as thin, knotty, and dusky as a burnt reed, but he could walk without fatigue from sunrise to sunset, subsisting on food which would starve a weasel. "Moula Buksh" was an experienced hand, and had himself killed or assisted to kill many tigers, but this one was, he confessed, too many for him; and he added that, although he knew her lairs, her watering-places, her favourite walks, and ways in

general, and had seen her more than once, he could never obtain a shot with any certainty of hitting her. I now suppose that when the old "Shikaree" and the man-eater did meet, the former was not sufficiently high up a tree, or otherwise secure from her spring to justify his firing at her with his very dilapidated single-barrelled old weapon, a cross between a musket and an ancient fowling-piece. Quite right he was, too, not to make the venture.

I found Moula Buksh in low spirits, whether at the disappointment felt through past ill success, or the apprehension of losing a handsome reward should any one else display the head and skin of this tigress; in decidedly low spirits he appeared whatever the cause; however, he plucked up both spirits and confidence after a while, and proved himself useful and cool in the sequel.

After gathering all the information that some hours' conversation enabled us to extract from the old "Shikaree" and others, it became necessary to study our ground, and this we did thoroughly for three whole days without hearing any news of our friend, her doings, or her whereabouts.

Briefly, the chief field of the tigress's exploits was a tract of low country, running some four or five miles parallel to the seacoast, and stretching nearly as far inland along both banks of a creek, the salt water from which during spring tides was let into shallow pans of earth, from which the salt efflorescence was afterwards scraped and collected when the tidal water had completely soaked into the soil. The entire ground, therefore, was cut up by lines of these narrow but rather deep channels, all leading from the creek into the interior, and since many of them were more or less overgrown with grasses and thorns, they afforded just what the man-eater desired, viz., secret approaches to where her victims might be at work. The fuel used for boiling down the brine was mostly cut along the banks of the creek and in fields of coarse grass not far from it; it naturally follows then that the tigress's usual beat when in search for human prey was along the edge of the heavier

covert lining both sides of this creek, and up the channels leading to the fields and boiling-houses.

Accompanied by my esquire Doolap, armed with my second gun, a 16-bore Joe Manton, "Moula" the melancholy carrying another of the same calibre, and I myself a 14-bore Westley-Richards (all light smooth bores but thoroughly good guns), we beat the ground just described over and over again till we had completely mastered its peculiarities, the promenades of the tigress, her favourite lairs, and her mode of attack.

It appeared that this man-hunter was quite indifferent as to day or night, or the time of either, when eager to kill; also that after taking a good look around in the course of a slow and deliberate stalk just within the jungle growing on the sides of the creek, from which she could and did see clearly although herself concealed by the dark shadows of the bushes, she used to crawl up one of the water-channels to a spot at which men were at work by day, or after dark she would creep softly and silently to the fence or hut from which a light appeared, or voices were heard. Most of her victims were seized in the afternoon just before the daily work was finished, and she ate them near where they were taken, so long as the spot offered concealment from the direction of the open country. At rare intervals she would kill and devour a wild hog—which abounded; and upon one occasion she seemed in a fit of playfulness to have destroyed nearly a whole sounder, as proved by the bones of five or six lying about a mud hole in which the pigs had wallowed and rooted. There was also a favourite tree on the bark of which she cleaned her claws, and inscribed her name in very legible character. She too was of a fidgetty and suspicious nature, as shown by continual changes of abode, and "worritings" around, as if unable or fearful to settle down; but as a rule, she never deserted the line of dense jungle growing on the river bank for any length of time, returning to it immediately after enjoying a tiffin or supper in the grass fields. No traces of any companion, male or female, young or old, could

be discovered ; and there were grounds for the belief that her absences for a week or so were attributable to an occasional search for a mate ; failing to find him she returned alone to her old haunts and murderous depredations.

On the night of the fourth day after my arrival, and close upon midnight, I was awakened from a deep sleep by the cries of the "pheeow" (or pheal), cries so fearful and blood-curdling as to appal those who have never before heard them ; as a matter of fact they chill the blood of many who have heard them often, and who know well the ignoble throats from which they proceed and what they often portend. This yell went up in the still midnight air in rapid succession half a dozen times a mile or so distant from my little camp, and then all was again deep silence. Others besides myself had heard and marked it, and with muttered warnings to each other and prayers for protection, awaited with me for a repetition. A quarter of an hour passed and then once more rose that fearful howl, but happily fainter and more distant, and then the ghostly form of Doolap, clothed in white from head to foot, appearing at the tent door, stood mute and still intently listening. Finding me awake, my trusty esquire quietly made his "official report" that the tigress had returned and would be heard of next day, and receiving an assent he withdrew as silently as he had appeared.

From sunrise to high noon we waited in camp the ghastly news we expected, but it did not come ; and then we sallied forth in search of fresh tracks in the mud left moist by the morning's flood tide. For full two hours we sought in vain, and then at length a long distance from camp there they were leading from the hard open ground to the creek, into the thorny jungle of which they entered, heading away from my camp.

The foot-prints proved that the tigress had walked very leisurely without searching for prey, thus far at least, into the heavy jungle. We did not dare to carry on the pursuit ; indeed, we could have penetrated it only on hands and knees, seeing very little before us, nor could we detect any foot-prints leading out again, though we proceeded a mile or more

further up its borders before returning home to lay our plans for the morrow. It was clear now that the man-eater was once more among us, having passed over a stretch of open country the night before, and caused that awful cry to be raised when stalking through the grass plain a mile or two from my tents.

No information came that evening, but next morning, before the sun rose, men roused us from sleep, with the intelligence that late on the previous afternoon two men had been wounded, and a third killed and carried off, three miles from camp; also that after seizing the unfortunate fellow, the tigress had taken him into some thick tangled grass, and probably there devoured him, as no one had ventured to follow and drive her away, and she had not been seen leaving it.

The man who had been taken was one of a dozen or more, returning together from market an hour before sunset, and who walked as is their custom in single file along a foot-path parallel in a zig-zag way with the deep creek and its jungles, but distant nearly a quarter of a mile from the latter. We were told that the attack came from a mere patch of low thatching grass, and at the moment it was made the men were talking loudly among themselves of this very beast, cursing her and her generations before and after her in the very emphatic and unmistakable language common among them—whether men or women. The last two of the file had first been struck at and knocked over, but it was the third from the rear who had been ultimately seized and carried away, the three having been close to each other and separated from the rest by a few paces. The scene of this tragedy was less than a quarter of a mile from where we had turned back, and its time was less than a couple of hours afterwards; it appeared then that she had walked through the dense thickets a couple of miles after entering them, and emerging once again had gone up a ditch and laid down in ambush within striking distance of the path, no doubt well known to her.

As rapidly as was possible, a hundred or more men were collected, with whom we proceeded to the field into which the body had been carried, and which we beat in line from end to end, without discovering a trace of the tigress, or her victim, except his waist cloth. A hundred yards beyond this field, was another overgrown with thorns and tamarisk, the tangled grass in it standing as tall as a man's head ; this patch we resolved upon burning, the north breeze blowing favourably for that purpose. Accordingly while a few men climbed the two or three stunted trees growing close by, I took my stand with the two gun-bearers, facing the south-east corner, or that nearest the heavier jungle bordering the river, concealed and protected in some degree by a small mimosa bush upon a mound of earth, and there waited to measure myself with the tigress, when she should issue from the burning grass, to retreat into the tree covert. But we were again doomed to disappointment, for although the fire burnt briskly and, leaping from bush to bush, roared and crackled in a very satisfactory manner, it passed over the entire field without any animal, other than a brace of jackals, showing itself. Walking over the charred roots and stumps, we discovered the skull, the hands and feet, and part of a leg of yesterday's victim, not together, but scattered about as if the jackals had been at work for some time ; the tigress, therefore, after taking her fill, had left the ground early last night, to take her water in the river, and was now safe from pursuit.

The moon being near the full, we determined upon sitting up to watch some path more frequented by the tigress than others, and after a consultation with the native officials connected with the Salt Agency, and with their ready assistance, a "machan" or platform was constructed among the branches of a young "peepul" tree (*Ficus religiosa*), growing at the corner of a tank, containing the only pure and sweet drinking water for some distance around. The tree grew on a bank three or four feet above the level of the fields, and although too low and too thinly furnished with leaves to afford security from a tiger's spring, or complete concealment,

it nevertheless was better than a seat on the ground all night, with the almost certainty of fever and ague as the sequence. Before her last absence from this locality, this pond used to be visited often by the tigress at night, to slake her thirst in its comparatively sweet water; and also as a favourable spot on account of its height, to take the air while reconnoitring the country. I confess, I had little hope of success in this attempt to obtain an introduction to her ladyship; but on the bare chance of it, and in the absence of any other resource, Doolap and I mounted the tree half an hour after sunset, provided with blankets to be spread on the "machan," over a foundation of dry grass; a cane footstool for my seat; three double barrellled guns; and certain creature comforts, not to be omitted when going upon a long watch.

Up to nine o'clock, the only creature which showed itself in the bright moonlight, was a solitary "kuttas," or large civet cat (*Viverra zibetha*), as big as a jackal almost; then came a sounder of five wild-hog which remained in and about the water fully half an hour before taking their departure; and those were shortly after succeeded by a pack of "providers," which after a drink and a chorus of howls and yells, trotted off across the fields in search of carrion.

Hours went by wearily, the moon reached and then passed the zenith, while we dozed and watched by turns all in vain; one and two o'clock were checked off on the watch-dial by aid of a match, and then the still night air vibrated with the "pheeow" cry, repeated rapidly three or four times till it died away in the far distance. Doolap remarked with a yawn that we should not see the tigress to-night; to which I replied, not till dawn perhaps; but when day broke, chill and foggy, we had seen nothing more.

Obtaining no fresh news, we resumed our seats on the same "machan" the next evening, and watched patiently in perfect silence, till past eight o'clock; the moon's bright beams flooded with light the water of the tank, and caused the dew on the grass and weeds to sparkle and shimmer

like diamonds, as the gentle night breeze breathed upon them. Recalling to mind the visitors of the previous night, I looked out for the sounder of pigs, longing for something to break the monotony of the weary night watch, when a low sound reached our ears, coming from some distance the other side of the pond. Repeated, it sounded like a moan finished off with a snarl, and it approached slowly and steadily; ten minutes elapsed and Doolap again called my attention this time not to any sound but to an object at which I was already straining my eyes; a few seconds more, and then as clearly almost as in daylight, the head and shoulders of a tiger appeared on the bank opposite us, distant sixty or seventy paces; and then they suddenly vanished. We waited and waited in the vain hope of another view, but nothing more was seen or heard that night; the tigress had manifestly detected our presence in the tree through the moon's rays beating full upon it, and had silently made off, suspicious of some trap or stratagem. For a long time after she had disappeared, a feeling of uncertainty and uneasiness took possession of us, not knowing whether having seen us, she was not crawling round to attack us on the flank or rear; accordingly we sat back to back, watching keenly with our fingers on triggers.

It is unnecessary to give the details of three other night-watches kept; two on platforms hidden completely by branches and bundles of grass, and the third in a hole in the ground some distance from camp, but beside a spot still red with the blood of another human victim struck down the preceding afternoon; we saw nothing of her, and only once more heard the "pheeow" at a considerable distance.

A fortnight had nearly passed since my arrival; five more men had been destroyed, and, notwithstanding all our efforts, a glimpse for a second or two was our sole reward. I had begun to think that I ought to have taken a snap-shot on the mere chance of a lucky hit, but expected the tigress to descend to drink in the tank, and thus to present a fair mark at fifty paces or less. Moula Buksh's visage grew longer,

his grey moustaches drooped more, and his thin goat's beard lost all the little curl it had ever boasted; Doolap became silent and morose, and my heart sank with hope so long deferred; but reluctance to admit discomfiture, and the entreaties of the people that I should remain to prosecute the adventure, combined to prevent my departure; and very thankful I was afterwards that I had so persevered.

The thirteenth afternoon after our first coming found us, gun in hand, slowly tracking from the open fields to the river-side jungle, and then up along it to the spot at which we had turned homewards on the day the people coming from market had been struck down, and there we rested under the shade of a tree, and took some refreshments brought in baskets by porters who had followed us at a distance in the open ground. One of the coolies remarking that this being a market day, the tigress might possibly be then on the watch close to the path followed by those returning from it, the idea struck us at once as not only possible but highly probable; accordingly the baskets were quickly repacked and sent off into the open, while I and the two "Shikarees" struck the outskirts of the jungle, and cautiously advanced step by step, every sense at its utmost stretch.

Thus we had gone half a mile, taking fully half an hour, and had gained a point from which, under concealment of thick-leaved bushes, we could command a view of the jungle-side, as well as over the plain, and there we stood silently for some minutes. Suddenly, as I looked ahead, something indistinct on the very edge of the covert caught my eye, and made my heart bound and my blood tingle with excitement. A slight motion of my hand made both my companions as watchful as myself, and at the same instant of time we all three saw the head and neck of a tiger protruding from the jungle a hundred and fifty paces ahead; the ears now pricked, now laid back, the mouth half open, the lower jaw drooping, and the head as motionless as if made of stone, the ears only excepted; our tigress at last!

What was she observing, and on what could she be so intent? By heavens, I have it!

Two hundred paces on our left, quite out in the open, was a fuel-cutter in a field, the high grass of which had at first hidden him from us as he stooped to his labour; but the tigress, both seeing and hearing him, had doomed him to a sudden and cruel death.

Quickly the projecting head turned from us as the man-eater took a cautious view up the path running parallel to the jungle, and then slowly and silently withdrew. What would be her next move? We had not long to wait to be informed. Fifty yards nearer us than the point at which she had first shown her head was a patch of coarse grass, and from it a water-channel led up to the fields where the wood-cutter cut and tied up his fuel. Skirted and half hidden by weeds and low scrub, this drain, now quite dry, approached us diagonally to a point some sixty paces in the plain to our left, and then forming an elbow, turned immediately towards the man's back, bent low to his work. The tigress's tactics became now plain, and her intention clearly was to creep up the ditch, and strike her victim from behind.

On again showing herself to us fifty paces nearer, the tigress crouched flat on the ground after a rapid glance up and outwards, and then she commenced to creep along the bed of the shallow channel, slowly and noiselessly.

All three of us had sunk to our knees to watch her proceedings, peering under and through the bushes behind which we lay hidden. My men breathed hard, and a strange look, half awe, half ferocity, flashed from their eyes, but no fear nor irresolution. My own heart was bursting, and my blood coursing like lightning through my veins, at this close sight of my first tiger; and such an one too! Rapidly and silently we exchanged opinions on the situation, and formed our plans. The tigress had now nearly gained the point where the water-course turned to the right at nearly a right angle; she moved very slowly, with a slightly undulating motion, very snake-

like and devilish in its every curve; and, crouching very flat, she showed above the ground only the head, the points of her shoulders, and a waving line of her back as I knelt; the mark, though a broad one, was too low for certain aim and for a certain death-wound, and must be improved ere I fired. Rising slowly to an upright position, I obtained, of course, a fuller sight: still it was too narrow, I felt sure, to allow of my killing her with one shot as I had hoped to do. There was no remedy, however. Accordingly, drawing a deep breath, and steadying my nerves, I pressed the trigger of the right barrel of the Westley-Richards, aiming below the shoulder-points. The shot was answered by such a furious roar of anger as must be heard to be realised; and before the smoke blew away and I could fire the left barrel, the stricken beast reared up on her hind legs, beating the air fiercely with her outstretched paws as if at some adversary, and, falling out of the watercourse on her side, bit at her wound, growling and gnashing most savagely. The view having cleared of smoke, I was trying to obtain an aim at a mortal spot, when my followers called upon me to fire again, each offering the spare gun held by him, and somewhat disturbing my steadiness. For a moment or two I failed to fix upon a point I liked, and the tigress had rolled over once or oftener before the second bullet struck her in the body, and this shot, by its smoke, revealed to her whence it came, for, gathering herself together, she bounded forward in our direction, receiving the contents of the right barrel of the old Joe full in her chest without stopping. "Now, sir, for God's sake, shoot straight; shoot her in the head," exclaimed my now excited men; but shooting in the head a beast advancing straight on with a rolling and bounding gait at fifty yards is advice easier given than acted on. I awaited, therefore, till she was half that distance from me, and then gave it her in the head, but too low, for the shot broke her lower jaw, and then entering the upper part of the chest, glanced outwards. This, the fourth shot, staggered her and made her reel from weakness; blood flowed freely from her gaping jaws and the wounds in

her side and back, but her cruel yellowish-green eyes shot fire as she once more advanced upon us with ominous growls; a compound of grunts and snarls seasoned by furious rage and desire for vengeance. My readers will understand that the situation had now become full of interest and excitement for all parties; for the tigress, caring for men not a jot, but sorely stricken and weak from loss of blood; for the men, caring very much indeed for the tigress a score of paces off, and holding in reserve only a couple of light barrels. In their excitement my attendants had sprung to their feet, so that there was no further concealment; the wounded monster and we looked each other in the face. Doolap was frantically loading the first gun (by the same token with bullets made for the Joe Manton, and two sizes too small), when once again I took a long breath, and catching a clear sight of her head, struck her down at a dozen paces, and then gave her the last barrel as close to the heart as I could well make out.

A shout burst from us as our late foe pitched on her head and stretched herself out with a long-drawn moan, while we stood still loading a barrel a-piece as fast as could be done in those days of muzzle-loaders, powder flasks, loading-rods, greased bullets, and caps; but as soon as each had a barrel ready and capped we advanced, I need not tell old hands, not directly but circuitously, so as to get on one side and rather behind her as she lay hard on to our position. There followed a few wide gapes, a stroke or two of the tail, and a quivering of the muscles of the neck and arms, and then hurrah! the man-eater was dead—dead as Julius Cæsar, dead to all taste of fat wild pork or sweeter “Molunghee” flesh, dead and gone with her cruel wiles and devilish appetites, her sneaking, crawling stratagems and unbounded voracity; hip, hip, hurrah!

You who never handle the spear or rifle, and pretend to sneer at the pleasures of sportsmen, do your moments of success ever yield you the joy felt by me, a mere lad, as I contemplated the work of my hands in ridding the world

of a monster such as this one was, and thereby saving from a cruel death hundreds of fellow-creatures?

We stood for some moments curiously regarding our late dangerous adversary, and then having no measuring tape, we took her length with a rope of twisted grass, from the tip of the nose over the head between the ears, and so along the spine to the tip of the tail pulled out tightly, carefully knotting the mark, and on reaching camp found she measured nine feet two inches. There was nothing remarkable about this tigress, save numerous scars on her head and body. She was rather past the prime of life, and her colouring had commenced to pale, but she was in full strength and vigour, her age adding experience only to subtlety. Over the head and above the left ear appeared the healed scar left by a wound received from a "dao" or bill-hook, inflicted by some one of her victims as she leapt upon him while occupied in cutting fuel; this had healed completely, and must have been three or four months old. A second cicatrix appeared on her left paw below the wrist, a third and older wound was on the left side of her face below the eye. These were manifestly received in attacks upon human beings, but there was a longer and deeper cut along her right side, still raw, plainly the work of a boar; lastly, on removing the skin, a small bullet, a ragged and hammered one, was found imbedded in the muscles of the shoulder, clearly fired into her by some native hunter a year or two before, and doing her as much injury as a wasp sting would do a man; and whoever he might have been, he was a lucky wight if he were perched high on a tree when that little lump of lead struck her, for if on foot he was a dead man to a certainty. This tigress without being fat was sleek and in good condition, and except that it was rather pale, her skin was without blemish other than the scars already described.

The woodcutter who had so narrowly escaped a sudden and painful death, had taken to his heels on hearing the first shot followed by the fearful roar of the wounded tigress, and had joined some others working in the fields farther from

the jungle-side. These perceiving us standing together after other shots had been fired, and concluding that we had killed the beast, now approached slowly and cautiously till beckoned to hurry up, when they came on at a run, and in the course of another quarter of an hour we were surrounded by a highly excited crowd of fifty or sixty men and boys, all eager to strike a blow at the dead tigress, and with the utmost difficulty prevented from plucking the bristles off her muzzle.

A sufficient number of men being collected, a dozen or more carried on their shoulders the dead animal slung upon stout poles, changing every half mile or thereabouts, my armed henchmen walking one on each side of her head to guard the claws and whiskers. The noisy procession swelled to several hundreds by the time our tents were reached, the delight and excitement of the people continuing unbounded till they separated for the night, the fear of travelling in the dark being now no longer felt.

The next morning, at least two thousand men, women, and children, came to view the monster, which, in life had caused them so much grief and terror, and the disappointment of the later arrivals was great when they found the skin had been taken off prior to their coming. That morning the people were ready to do anything for me, and I have no doubt that my servants benefited by the enthusiasm of the moment; however that may have been, the two "Shika-rees" shared the reward of three hundred rupees, given by the Salt Agent, and Moula the melancholy returned to his home with a full purse and a cheerful countenance, while Signor Doolap maintained his stolidity and taciturnity to the last, nor did I ever hear of his burning an extra candle in his chapel, albeit he, his family, and friends, for some time subsequently were noticed as wearing new clothes and festive countenances.

I left the scene of this man-eater's exploits on the afternoon following that of her death, and have never revisited it; but before I left, the widow of the man last killed

presented herself with her three little children, and the general impression appeared to be that the proper thing for me to do, was either to give her a substantial bonus then and there, or at least a promise of a comfortable little life pension. Being a "griff," this popular notion struck me as somewhat illogical; for what had I done, and who was I, that I should pay a deodand for the tigress which had killed, eaten, and digested a man never seen by me, and whose name had never reached my ears? The widow clearly expected this much of me, and the dusky crowd accepted the claim as quite reasonable. The Darogha—an official of the Salt department—alone seemed to have some doubts on the subject, and was guarded in the expression of an opinion; but enlarging upon it, and drawing upon his memory for similar instances, quoted cases of certain illustrious gentlemen having granted a bonus, a pension, or even a piece of land belonging to the Government, to the widows or family of those shot by them through mistake and misadventure, and of others maimed for life, who had imprudently got into the way of the spent bullets or shot. These observations, and the very apt precedents quoted by the Darogha, being received by the local public with high approval, and by the widow with renewed howls and cries, I began to find myself regarded as one trying to evade a plain duty; however I explained as well as I was able that I was but a poor man, and had already devoted as much time and money as I could well afford in the destruction of the common enemy; that I had done no harm to the deceased husband and father; I had not bound him as a victim, and sat over him for the tigress as an Eastern potentate might do; nor had I ever seen him; and lastly, that the widow, appearing quite young, might live as long as I did, and it was not reasonable to expect that a pension should be paid by me for forty or fifty years, for no default on my part, and no injury done to any one; that if any party was bound to give the pension to the widow it ought to be the Government in whose service the deceased was when he met with death; my remarks did not

appear convincing, but the concluding one caused, to my surprise, some to smile and others to laugh outright; nor did the reason for this hilarity become clear to me till I had gained more experience, and learned that although generosity and open-handed liberality were to be looked for from European gentlemen, anything beyond hard and bare justice was not to be expected from Government, much less spontaneous generosity and unprofitable liberality; accordingly my suggestion was received as a joke not to be passed over without recognition even under present melancholy circumstances. Finally, on my proposing that some one then present, who had not the full tale of wives, should take the widow to complete his happiness, public opinion veered round in my favour, and the Darogha, a grave and bearded Mahomedan official, coming to my aid, dismissed the woman rather abruptly with uncomplimentary remarks, and then dispersed the laughing crowd, incited thereto by the mere mention of the awful name of Government, or peradventure by the possibility of his being esteemed the most fit and eligible person to appropriate the widow, as having but very recently divorced one of his four fair partners. I have reason to believe that had I been weak enough to have admitted the validity of the claims made upon me by this widow, at least forty more were held in reserve for subsequent presentation, to my utter bankruptcy for life.

This expectation on the part of natives for presents, compensations, and rewards from Europeans, for almost every conceivable thing, is curious, and leads to the conjecture that in former days when the two—Europeans and natives—first became acquainted with each other, either the former having more money than they knew how to squander, flung it about the country in alms, charities, and complimentary donations upon all of black complexion willing to accept the same; or that they were so gullible and so wanting in common sense, that any cock-and-bull story would induce them to “fork out.” It is quite certain that a form of gift, recognised throughout the length and breadth of the land as “bamboo-bukshish,”

was very common in past times, and was much resorted to for the relief of many afflictions by the officials of Government from the highest to the lowest, as well as by "adventurers and others, trading in the East Indies." Suffice it to say that the principle is admitted, that should any black or brown individual, man, woman, or child, or any animal belonging to either of them, be disturbed in any way, frightened or injured, through misadventure, or through his, her, or its own folly, negligence, or stupidity, some white person is bound to make compensation, yea, ten-fold. This practice is so generally acknowledged as the correct one, (of course for this and other countries inhabited by black and brown people only), that even the Government of India has been known to feed plenteously twenty millions during seasons of scarcity, when only three or four millions have been really hungry; moreover, at certain times and seasons, acts done by persons of black or brown tints are recognised by it as eminently deserving of special honours or rewards, which being done by white or whitey-brown folks are passed over as no more than falling within their duty; or other than was reasonably to be expected of them. This difference of treatment is so startling as sometimes to excite the suspicious alarm of even those who benefit by it, while it rouses the anger and disgust of the others, who cannot appreciate the tender kindness exhibited.

I have been led to make these remarks in order that they may serve as warnings to new comers upon whom attempts at extortion will certainly be made, as so-called "compensation for disturbance," or fictitious losses and injury. Accidents will occur to even the most careful, and sometimes injury may be inflicted in innocence of any wilful negligence or ill-intent, and in such cases full and liberal compensation should be given, and is as a rule; but, on the other hand, loud and unreasonable demands should be resisted invariably, and reduced to just and proper bounds.

It may be thought that a man saved by another from a frightful death owes the latter a debt, and is not his

creditor. Quite a mistake would this be in India. A gentleman, at considerable risk to himself, entered a burning house, and rescued from certain death a Bengalee Brahmin, whom he sent to the hospital for treatment of sundry burns, and having maintained him there a week or two, dismissed him cured to his home. Did that gentle Hindoo depart in peace, grateful, and calling down blessings on the head of his benefactor? Not a bit of it. He first refused to stir till "bukshish" was given, and his expenses paid for the journey home; then some money being offered, the pious and mild creature became abusive, and rejected the proffered gift as utterly insufficient. Being hustled out of the gentleman's premises, the black Levite disappeared for a day or two, to reappear and pester my friend in his daily rides; and on being called upon to name his terms, the Brahmin suggested that having been rescued from a death to which he was doomed, he who had intervened was bound to make provision for him for the rest of his life, either by a pension or by gift of an appointment of some kind sufficient for the maintenance of himself and family. Now, my friend was one who dealt more in the *suaviter in modo* than in the *fortiter in re*, but even his extremely kind nature was roused to anger by the man's impudence. Accordingly, I understand that recourse was had to the "bamboo-bukshish" mentioned before, which settled the matter to the complete satisfaction of all parties concerned.

A relative of the writer, an impulsive and inconsiderate youth, had the audacity to save under similar circumstances a decrepit old Hindoo woman, whose hovel was ablaze over her head, and to place her in safety among the crowd, not without sundry burns of his own person and clothing. I was not present, but am given to understand—and by my own experience can fully believe—that the torrent of foul abuse heaped on the rescuer's unoffending head by the hag was sufficient in power to turn a considerable water-mill. (Moral; it is better to let burn than to save, in Bengal at least.) The strangest part of the incident is that no native newspaper, so

far as we were aware, published an account of this affair, turning it into "another act of brutality perpetrated by a ruffianly Anglo-Indian upon a native lady." Be it known that in these cases it never is an Englishman, but always an Anglo-Indian, who is the object of the diatribe.

European sportsmen, especially the inexperienced, are liable to be mobbed by villagers, though neither intending nor doing any injury, and this becomes commoner the nearer the scene is to the Presidency. The best way to meet such misadventures is to remain as calm as is possible; to sit down, gun in hand, and quietly to "argue the point" like Mr. Midshipman Easy. There is nothing so posing to a native mob as a cool and judicial bearing, and equally nothing more exasperating than an interchange of loud threats and invectives to which they are accustomed among themselves. The *argumentum baculinum* should be kept in reserve as the last resource, as the advance of the Imperial guard to finish the affair, and if ever resorted to, it should be short and sharp, notwithstanding the odds of ten or twenty to one; also under none but the direst necessity should the police or the courts be appealed to, the remedy being worse than the disease. In most instances, even after blows, compromises will be possible, and will always be infinitely preferable to law, while the exercise of temper, coolness, and judgment, will carry a man through many a row into which he has been forced against his wishes.

Some there are among the natives so fond of litigation, and so vindictive in disposition, that nothing will satisfy them but recourse to those abyssmal reservoirs of vexatious forms and procrastinations, the courts civil and criminal. There is a saying among the people of the eastern districts that the inhabitants of Chittagong are so revengeful and litigious, that an accidental brush of a man's shoulder against a neighbour's thatch will give rise to law suits which will last two generations.

Out snipe-shooting one day with H., of the Civil Service, in rather high green "paddy," he had the misfortune to

lodge a grain or two of No. 8 shot in that part of a black agriculturist's body which was most prominent as the owner stooped to his weeding. Then followed a sudden start, a scratch of the horny surface of the part affected, a stare round, and then a howl. The man was struck at a distance of about a hundred yards, and the shot just penetrated the skin, and no more, doing about as much harm as a mosquito bite; but this incident striking the guileless rustic as a good opportunity for making money, he did not neglect it. First, shouts went up for help, followed by a wild cry for his father and mother, and then some choice abuse for our benefit; and finally, a loud and vehement demand for "compensation for disturbance." As the creature—a stout and bearded Ferozi-Mahomedan—was in no way hurt, and the mischance had touched the toughest and least honourable part of his body, a rupee would have served as an ample soothing-plaster; but my companion, being urged by his exalted emotions as one of Heaven's elect, foolishly offered five rupees, which, after a consultation between the victim's fingers and his nether end, was indignantly rejected, with threats of a prosecution for assault, grievous hurt, and unlawful assembly. I now humbly suggested the acceptance of two and a-half, with the alternative of a recourse to the court above or below the earth's surface, at his option. The shark having tasted blood, or at least discovered a tiny drop of it on its tail (H.'s luckless target), became voracious, and demanded ten; in other words, sufficient to maintain him and his brood in a merry and distended condition for a couple of months. This last offer of compensation was abusively refused, and the man, narrowly escaping what he well deserved, went off to lay a charge of hurt wilfully done him by H., which charge was in due course heard and dismissed; and thus the ingenuous rustic lost his temper, his case, and provision for self and family for a whole month, in an attempt at extortion, incited by greed and malice. Being well-known officials of the district, the charge brought against us was proceeded with promptly, and we were in

no way inconvenienced; had we been visitors or travellers we might have been detained for some time, if not forced to pay blackmail in order to have done with the matter, and be allowed to go on our ways.

While animadverting upon the notorious bad temper, and the litigious and quarrelsome nature of the Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal, it is due to them that I should add that I have always found them a more manly and straightforward set of people in general than the agricultural classes of other parts of that province; more self-reliant under difficulties, and more courageous in peril; they are, too, more generous and open-handed: but a case in Court has for them an irresistible charm, and supplies them, their friends and relations with a never-ending topic of conversation, affording them keen enjoyment; perhaps it communicates some social eminence among their community which Europeans cannot appreciate or comprehend. To such people, how truly delightful and how suitable in every way must be our cumbrous method of doling out justice grain by grain, at the slowest and most expensive rates possible; giving the longest purse the best chance, by long odds, of final victory; and now that year by year, more of these Courts are presided over by purely native officials, these evils are aggravated.





CHAPTER IX.

Buffalo and Buffalo-hunting and Shooting—Rapidly disappearing—
Encounter with and Death of a Savage Bull—Effects of Big and
Small-bore Rifles on Bulls—A Long Run and a Disappointment—
A Tough Customer—A Neat Shot—An Amphibious Boar.

It is not long ago, as time is measured by men of middle age, that wild buffaloes were abundant in most districts of Eastern and Southern Bengal; never, perhaps, in such vast herds as in Assam, but still they were plentiful in Purneah, Maldah, Dinagepoor, Julpigoree, Dacca, Furreedpoor, Noakholly, Backergunge, and the salt tracts of Midnapoor, Balasore and Cuttak; so plentiful, indeed, as not to be the object of pursuit on elephants except on rare occasions and by “Griffins;” they were not, therefore, much molested nor fired upon when roused in front of a line of elephants beating for tigers or rhinoceros; more, however, from being common than on account of their gentle and harmless character.

Where these animals formerly roamed over the “churs” of the great rivers and the swampy plains of the interior in herds of hundreds, a few individuals only now survive in some of those localities, and not one in many others. There exist still some small herds in Purneah, Maldah, Dinagepoor, Julpigoree, and Backergunge; but, with rare exceptions, they are degenerate descendants of the ancient herds of the plains in respect of bulk and courage, and are often timid creatures, which run at the distant sight of horsemen or of a line of elephants. Where their predecessors slew their scores, the young “Nimrods” of the present day must rest content if they bring down one or two bulls, and may consider

themselves fortunate if they ever obtain a trophy worthy of a place beside the mighty heads and horns secured during the first and second quarters of this century.

Wild buffaloes, when not worried and disturbed, are remarkably bold, roaming fearlessly in open day over their grazing grounds, and seeking shelter in heavy jungle from the midday sun only; or more commonly they lie in miry pools, buried to the nose in muddy water, defying the flies, which torment them in the open plains and thick reeds. Carrying such immense horns as they do, buffaloes avoid tree coverts, through which they can penetrate with difficulty only, whereas through heavy grass and tall, stout reeds, they pass as easily as do fish through water, with heads held high and level with the back, and horns thrown upon the shoulders. Where these animals constantly traverse immense areas of gigantic reeds, growing to the height of fifteen to eighteen feet, innumerable alleys are formed, along which they pass backwards and forwards, completely sheltered from the sun, the leafy tops intermingling and forming a canopy overhead.

The hunter, following a herd with his line of elephants into such a covert as that just described, need take heed, for he may, and often will, find himself assailed by animals whose horns alone can be seen now and again as they surge past him with a mighty crash of breaking reeds, charging and butting his elephants, and creating among them greater alarm and unsteadiness than will snarling tigers, or even the snorting and ponderous rhinoceros. It is no uncommon occurrence for severe wounds to be received under such circumstances, or even for elephants to be brought down upon their knees by the home charges of bulls of more than ordinary bulk, which will continue their attacks till killed or disabled, or till their adversaries have been driven off the field.

As brave as a boar, and as ferocious as a tiger or panther, a buffalo will often disdain to quit his ground, preferring rather to fight till death, if unable to vanquish his assailant;

or, victor in the combat, he will follow up his success with a furious pertinacity unequalled by any other beast of which I have any experience. Instances have come within my own knowledge of mounted hunters having been driven clean out of the field, becoming the hunted in their turn ; and of stalkers on foot who have failed to bring down the charging bull or cow, barely escaping with their lives, sorely wounded and battered. One of my acquaintances, a keen hunter of tigers and buffaloes, was killed outright by a wounded bull he had somewhat imprudently followed into a thicket.

Besides a remarkable ferocity, the buffalo displays a mean craftiness [unworthy of his vast size and strength, in concealing himself in the first heavy piece of jungle he comes to in his flight, and from its shelter suddenly charging upon his pursuers. Of such tactics the writer has witnessed many examples, some ending seriously and others laughably. Men and elephants have been frequently injured by such unexpected onslaughts, stalkers driven up into trees, and horsemen pursued out of the jungle, over the open, to a considerable distance ; the last, a sight however ludicrous to spectators, no laughing matter to the actors in the comedy.

Buffalo-stalking on foot, whether in the open or in covert is a sport which calls for some nerve and caution ; and the fact of the beast having or not having the wind is of the utmost importance, because, possessing indifferent sight, they trust much to scent, and on winding human enemies, they will, if alarmed, take to flight, or, if savage, charge down viciously. Dressed suitably as to colour, and moving cautiously without any abrupt movements, the stalker may, with the wind in his favour, approach a solitary bull within easy rifle range even on the bare plain and comparatively open country ; with less ease a troop of young bulls, and with less still a herd, in which there are certain to be one or more on watch on each side, most frequently very old cows, since the master bulls seldom trouble themselves to act as sentries, but feed or rest in the midst of their families.

Riding down buffaloes on horseback on fairly good ground is excellent sport, and when the ground is indifferent, or positively bad, the sport is exciting and even dangerous, demanding the utmost care and skill to avoid great peril to horse and rider. So long as the herd is on the run the danger is confined mostly to the charges of wounded beasts falling into the rear, and then in the case of savage bulls, or cows with calves, it becomes considerable, especially on broken or deep ground, on which horses cannot turn quickly at full speed. So far as my own experience teaches, there are two positions to be carefully avoided as extremely perilous; one is the immediate front of any animal which has fallen behind, the other is close contact with one which could, with a side sweep of its long horns, rip up the horse's side, or hurl the rider headlong to the earth.

First to start and afterwards to ride down a thoroughly vicious bull is grand sport; very exciting, too, is it when, disdaining flight, he meets the hunter half way.

I was out hog-hunting with S. at Balamara, in the Noakholly district, one excessively hot April day, and had just returned with him to our camp at noon, tired and heated with a successful morning's sport, more eager for a bath and breakfast than for aught else, when some villagers brought in the corpse of a man killed an hour or two before by a bull buffalo, reported to have joined a small herd of tame cows, a mile or two distant, and to have seriously hurt some others while making unsuccessful attempts to drive him off. Loth as we were to face the sun and heat again immediately, we could not resist the appeal for help; accordingly, after taking some refreshment, we remounted, and, accompanied by the relatives of the deceased, proceeded in the direction pointed out by them. As usual, the mile or two grew to be three or four, and the blazing sun had descended half-way to the western horizon, beyond the sparkling waters of the Megna, before a group of half a dozen buffaloes was pointed out to us as that with which we had to deal presently. I ought to have mentioned before that on our

ride we had met men who were carrying to us the body of a woman just killed, in the expectation that a sight of it would verify their tale, and move us to rid them of the murderous bull.

When first descried through the hot quivering vapour of the April afternoon the herd appeared to be about half a mile away, standing in a patch of low, dry grass, and looming almost as large as elephants. Stationed apart in a knot as if for mutual comfort and protection were five tame cows, not such as are to be seen among the tame herds in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, but tall stout beasts, displaying unmistakably in form and size a wild strain, such as used to graze in hundreds on the "churs" and islands of the Megna and Brahmapootra rivers, fearless alike of tigers on land, and monster crocodiles in the water. These cows loomed gigantic through the shimmering hot air, but they were small when compared with the huge form towering above them, as it appeared standing sixty or seventy yards beyond. The bull was obviously uneasy, and keenly on the look out for some enemy or victim, lowering his outstretched head only to drive away impatiently with his horns the gnats and flies which pestered him; the cows keeping together, now and again picked up a morsel of grass, but they too were clearly unsettled in their minds, and seemed anxious to separate from the intruder, but yet afraid to move off.

S. and I were mounted on fine Arabs, fleet and experienced hunters, bold as lions and sure-footed as goats. We carried light double-barrelled guns of 16 bore, handy for use on horseback, but lamentably deficient in power when used against such an adversary as that before us, except indeed at very close quarters, and aimed at the weak points of his body. Although young men, we had had considerable experience, and were able to gauge fully well the character and powers of our opponent. We understood his strength and speed, and knew how to set about what had to be done; for not only had the murder just committed by the beast given us an idea of his disposition, but his gaunt and savage aspect, as he

stood gazing around in a menacing attitude, warned us to act with caution, and to be prepared for a charge like the rush of a steam engine.

Dismissing our followers we advanced abreast leisurely, keeping the cows as much as was possible between ourselves and the bull, and in this way we approached to within two hundred paces or thereabouts of the former, which now slowly moved aside, leaving us in full view of our adversary, who, after a savage stare, tossed his horns threateningly at us and prepared for action. Both parties now advanced slowly, the riders some twenty or thirty yards apart, in order to distract attention, till they approached within a hundred paces of the bull, which, lowering his head to the earth, delivered his charge at full speed, and the hunters separated right and left, the horses at their fastest, but kept well in hand.

The bull, selecting the grey horse and his rider, tore headlong after them, and they, I need hardly observe, did not wait to ask his intentions, but galloped away from him at best pace. Meanwhile the rider of the bay turned, and following the bull at racing speed, caught him up after a smart burst, and gave him a shot in the side, turning off rapidly as the wounded beast swerved and endeavoured to close. It became now the business of the bay Arab to save himself and rider by getting well ahead, while the grey ranged up alongside, and his rider delivered his shot into the bull's short ribs, and again in their turn these two became the pursued. This game continued for about as lively a quarter of an hour as ever I spent, by which time the buffalo had received half-a-dozen bullets in his shoulders and ribs at very short ranges, and bleeding profusely, had pulled up to take breath and consider further proceedings, keeping at the same time an eye on each horse and rider.

The second round then began, and two more bullets, smacking loudly upon his tough hide, brought on a repetition of the performances above described, and the bull once more made a desperate charge, but not at the same headlong speed, nor with the same vigour, though with courage and resolution

unabated. At length, when the last effort had been made in a frantic and almost blind rush upon his foes, the bull staggered and nearly fell, as blood spirted from his mouth, nostrils, and a dozen wounds on his body. For a moment or two longer he stood upon his trembling and stradling legs, and in a last effort to make one more charge, the bull fell headlong to the earth and expired with a prolonged bellow of rage and pain.

Hardly had we dismounted, eased girths, and inspected our prostrate adversary, than shouts arose from all sides, and in less than a quarter of an hour, we were surrounded by a crowd of excited villagers, while women and children turned out of their houses to look on at a distance, as being Mussulmans they might not show their faces or mix among a throng of menfolk.

This was, I think, the tallest bull I have ever seen (at least he looked it both before and after his death), but we took no measurements, having no tape with us. Possibly being extremely gaunt, he looked taller than he really was. The horns were of moderate size in length and stoutness, and on removing one of them from the bone to examine a wound, we discovered the cause in some measure of his excessively savage and murderous disposition, for it then appeared that he had been struck by a native "Shikaree's" bullet at its root some three days before, at a spot twelve miles distant, as we subsequently learned; and maggots having got into the wound had driven him in a half mad state raging across country, destroying all that came in his way—men, women, children, or cattle.

It will be seen that in the above encounter my companion and I had no great difficulty in eluding the desperate charges of the bull, or in overtaking him afterwards to deliver our fire; but we had some important advantages in our favour, viz., very fleet and active hunters, mounted by men weighing less than ten stone, sound and hard ground to ride over, rough only where the wild thatching grass still grew, the rest being fields from which the cold weather crops

had recently been harvested. On the other hand, though a large and powerful beast, the bull was somewhat old, and probably not so vigorous as he would have been without the wound he had received, and the irritation caused by it. On bad and broken ground I believe we should hardly have succeeded in slaying him without some accident to man or horse, or at least without the utmost difficulty or a prolonged battle.

I have known a good rider, admirably mounted, taken full twelve miles by a wounded bull before the latter fell; and as an example of what lusty young males can do in speed and wind, the following adventure may be related here—

My chum in many a bout with the beasts of the field, Dr. P., and I, were encamped near Kulkapoor, on the Soobun-reeka river, in the Midnapoor district, one fiery week in April, when the hot west winds were blowing uncommonly free from nine a.m. till sunset, about which time, or a little later, the south sea breeze set in and cooled (?) the air down to about 90° or 92° under canvas. During the afternoon, from noon till five, the temperature must have been over 100° , and yet it was tolerated willingly for sport, though soldiers and their leaders are considered martyrs to duty if they suffer such heat. I have been glad to get under a table for protection when the mercury in my boat or tent has stood at something over 100° Fahrenheit in Bengal, the climate of which is "temperate" when compared with that of many parts of India. We were out for the special object of securing some black buck, which were still to be found in some numbers in that neighbourhood, not of course in great herds as in the North-west and Central Provinces, but in some flocks of six or eight. We varied our sport by stalking spotted deer in the early mornings, and had a turn with a herd of sixty or eighty wild buffaloes, which held possession of a low plain not far from camp; but they were not particularly sought by us on that occasion, though the country admitted of their pursuit on horseback. Our practice was to sally out soon after dawn and a light "chota haziree," and to

return to our tents at noon or a little before it ; then to lie up till evening, when we strolled about gun in hand till dark.

One very sultry afternoon information arrived that three buffaloes were standing under a tree in the open plain a mile or two from camp ; whereupon mounting our horses we sallied out about four o'clock, taking a good battery and half-a-dozen attendants with the usual necessities of sport and provender, and after a short ride over the hard baked rice fields espied the buffaloes ; clearly young bachelors of full growth, who had formed a "chummery" and lived on the outskirts of the big herd, into which they were refused admittance by the master bull through jealousy, or for some breach of bovine etiquette. However that may be, there they were, standing in the shade of a tree on the bare and parched plain, staring with out-stretched necks in three different directions, and clearly uncomfortable in their minds as quite out of their proper place on such a waterless plain on a scorching day, longing for a muddy pool, in search of which they had no doubt strayed to where they then were. Under cover of a line of bushes a quarter of a mile distant from them, our plan of attack was arranged, which was to approach within a moderate rifle range on hands and knees, keeping well to leeward as we fortunately then stood, and afterwards, under shelter of two or three bushes which grew between them and us, facilitating our stalk to give them the contents of our rifles, and then mounting as rapidly as we could, to pursue them with our smooth bores.

Accordingly taking a gun bearer a-piece, we started upon our tiresome stalk over the dry hard ground, rifle in hand, getting a little cover under the low ridges which divide the fields, till the bushes were gained, and then having arrived within a hundred and twenty or thirty yards of the bulls, we sat down to get our breath.

As has been remarked before, the buffaloes were uneasy and quite prepared for a run ; moreover, there was not a shrub or mound behind which we could hope to approach closer. We resolved therefore to open fire as soon as our hands grew

perfectly steady, and our hearts beat with the ordinary pulsation. I carried a new double 10-bore poly-grooved rifle made for me by Westley-Richards, under the special care of the late "Bishop of Bond Street," than which a better weapon was never made, for with steel-tipped conical bullets weighing $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, it has done great things with big game of all kinds during a long course of years, remaining to this day as good as it ever was. My friend P. was an admirer of much smaller bores; arguing that penetration, which was the main object, was as fully attained by a bullet weighing an ounce with its proper allowance of powder, as with one of double or treble that weight. I feel bound to state that about the time I write of, P. had maintained his position "on principle," like the gentleman in "Pickwick," who, to prove that crumpets were wholesome, and not liable to shorten life as his doctor predicted, bought half-a-crown's worth and having eaten them all blew out his brains, demonstrating plainly that crumpets did not kill him, so P. who had lost through this pet theory more large game than would set up for life a modern Nimrod, being a man of great discernment too, must have seen the practical results of it long ere this; still "on principle" he had brought out on that day a 16-bore rifle, throwing a bolted pellet weighing an ounce, and with this light pea-shooter set about proving the (in)correctness of his theory of penetration.

When both were ready each selected his bull. The loud smack of my bullet had not come back to my ears before mine, taken behind the shoulder, dropped in his tracks, but struggling up again on his legs received a second shot which killed him outright. P. had fired and also struck his bull fairly, but the latter made off at a gallop with his unwounded companion.

Our horses being brought up smartly, I left my friend to look after his wounded bull, and passing them at speed followed the other which made such good time over the ground as to push my mare to her best pace. I was mounted that day on a young thorough-bred, a trifle under fifteen hands,

the winner of many races since then ; the country although rough, hard, and divided into fields by ridges eighteen to twenty-four inches high, with one now and then somewhat higher, was sound enough, but do all we could, we could not come up to the bull much under a couple of miles with the long start given him, and then he received an ounce bullet in his ribs with a considerable rake forward, and which seemingly had no other effect upon him than to make him shake his horns, and "put hams into his furnace." We had now arrived upon broken ground with bushes and tree stumps thickly strewn over it, and upon this my mare was not the bull's superior in speed. Another mile and we got into denser bush and stumps, the bull forging ahead now notwithstanding all our efforts ; finally, when we had gone over four miles, and I had fired an ineffectual shot from behind, the chase sailed out of sight in the thickening jungle and was seen no more.

I returned to camp at dusk, a wiser and a sadder man than when I had left it three hours before ; P. had reached it before me, and on my arrival was smoking a cigar in a long chair attired in an extremely easy and light costume. He was reticent too about his adventures subsequent to our separation, from which circumstance I concluded that his ride had been no more successful than mine ; in short, I learned afterwards that like Mr. Parsons in "Happy Thoughts," he had had a "nasty cropper." After dinner, however, when the discussion on small and big bores had been resumed, and once more adjourned *sine die*, P. confided to me his opinion that the pill administered to his bull had acted upon him as a tonic, a "pick-me-up" of a very efficacious nature, and that he had gone away at such a pace much in the same direction as mine had taken, that he (P.) was debating in his mind whether to continue the seemingly useless pursuit, when a fall on his head upon some rough and hard clods finally decided the matter, nevertheless he adhered to the opinion that an ounce bullet put into the proper place was as effective as, &c., &c.

In the present instance we have an example of how a

bull buffalo in his prime can, on rough and broken ground, beat a very good horse with only ten and a half stone up. The extreme heat of the day may have had some injurious effect on both horse and rider, but I was not conscious of it at the time and doubt it now, believing that we were fairly beaten on ground unfavourable to us but not to the bull. In the comparatively open country we had caught him up without difficulty. Perhaps had my mare and I had the same weighty inducements to do our very best as the bull had, the result might have been different; but I doubt it, and think that if we did pretty well the bull did better, and deserved to live to race another day for life and liberty.

I suppose that question of great and small bores is not one likely to arise at the present day, but it was one much discussed formerly round the mess-table and the camp fire, when many men insisted that small bullets driven home with a sufficient charge of powder *ought* to be as effective as much larger ones, though propelled by proportionately heavy charges; and therefore, that they were so, *q.e.d.* disregarding the fact that gun and rifle barrels as then manufactured for general use could not take the large charges necessary to give the force and velocity they required, the notion, however, had in it the germs from which have sprung the modern "Express" rifles.

I have myself driven a spherical half-ounce bullet completely through a buffalo's shoulder from a long American rifle of the true "Path-finder" type, and have cut it out from under the skin on the further side; but the animal was not killed by that shot, nor, indeed, do I believe that it was very much the worse for it, but of course, had the little pellet cut through any large blood-vessel it would have caused the bull's death within a certain time, but his head would not have proved a trophy in camp that evening, as was the case. I may be wrong, but the opinion is held by me that for bison, buffalo, and rhinoceros, a 10-bore rifle is superior to the heaviest "Expresses" made at present.

We read of the extraordinary tenacity of life exhibited

by the American grizzly bear, and how, after receiving three or four well-placed bullets, he will display a vivacity and liveliness of disposition quite remarkable to the Western hunter and the Red Indian. Would that grizzly be equally lively and playful after receiving the same number of two or three-ounce conical or spherical balls, driven with eight or ten drams of good English powder? I doubt it much, and believe that a bull buffalo, a rhinoceros, or even a tiger would show the aforesaid Western hunter or Red Indian, armed with a 32-bore rifle, sport which would be kept up much longer than by any of his grizzlies, admitting at the same time that the last are very tough customers, as are even our Indian sloth-bears, though far less in bulk.

Buffaloes appear to be almost as much at home in water as on land, and take readily to the former element if hard pressed by enemies. It was remarked that in the cyclone of 1876 the destruction of the tame herds on the islands at the mouth of the Megna was inconsiderable as compared with that of all other animals, wild or domesticated.

I was out shooting on one occasion at "Jackson's kotee," in Noakholly, when, sport failing me there, deer becoming scarce, and neither tiger nor panther turning up, I determined on making a long day of it in shooting over the "chur" north of Balamara, and west of Raipoor, some ten miles distant from where I then was, in the ruins of the Company's old Factory, a place of some importance eighty or ninety years ago; accordingly, the elephants were started off at three o'clock in the morning, and I followed on horseback as soon as day broke, the country not being such as to invite a ride in the dark. Expecting to find nothing more than hog-deer and marsh partridge; a brace of smooth-bores and a light rifle only were taken out that day, with which I had bagged two or three stags, when, to my surprise, a small herd of wild buffaloes was put up, which took at once to the open, deserting the patch of low reeds beaten by me. As the elephants showed themselves in the plain, the cows with their calves made off at a lumbering gallop; the bull of the herd, a mag-

nificent fellow, with very fine horns, remained behind to protect their retreat, facing us boldly as we advanced. When we were a hundred yards from him the gallant beast charged, head down between his forelegs, horns pointed to the front, and tail in air; a grand sight it was, the ground being bare of all but rice stubble. As has been mentioned, my battery was a light one, and therefore the bull was allowed to charge up to twenty or five-and-twenty paces of my elephants before he received two bullets on the shoulders, which caused him to swerve, and two more rapidly followed in his ribs as he pulled up, and turning upon the beating elephants, charged home on a young female, and drove her screaming with fright before him, butting at her broad stern for some distance. I again approached the furious bull, as he faced the remaining two after the rout of the elephant, and this time was permitted to advance within sixty yards ere he repeated his rush; he got two more wounds about the neck, again swerving from me towards the remaining beater, a tall strong male, by whom he was received upon the points of his long tusks, and hurled back upon his haunches, in which position two more shots took effect upon him, and made him retire sulkily a short distance.

By this time my adversary had received eight one-ounce bullets, fired with as heavy charges of powder as I dared to use in my light guns, and was bleeding freely from some of his wounds, while others showed only white spots upon his tough black hide. I had failed up to this time to strike him on the spine as I wished, and had not fired the rifle at all, it being an old-fashioned single-barrel, throwing a half-ounce ball; so far then the bull, except for the encounter with the male elephant, did not seem much the worse for his wounds; but he must have lost confidence in his powers, since, on nearing him once more, he contented himself with an attitude of defence, shaking his long horns, and pawing the ground, when a couple more shots struck him, and made him take to flight, getting in his stern the contents of the second gun and the little rifle.

The bull now laid himself out to rejoin his herd, whose retreat he had so gallantly protected, and we followed as fast as the elephants could get over the ground, and overtook him standing in a field of grass, where he awaited us, and charged fiercely, receiving the contents of four more barrels at close quarters; nevertheless, he went away strong on his legs, albeit bleeding from a dozen wounds, particularly from those in the ribs, the more forward shots showing as white discs upon his shoulders. I had meanwhile sent for my horse, and mounting as soon as he could be brought up, galloped after the bull, then fully a mile away, going south at a slow canter after the cows, and every now and then pulling up to look around and behind him. The country was quite open, and except for numerous small "nullahs" into which the tide flowed at the springs, presented no obstacles, it having been one of the best for hog-hunting in all Bengal, and famous for its fleet and savage boars.

No sooner did the bull find himself again pursued by something new with a man on it, than he increased his pace and made for the banks of the Megna on his right, and while I was still a hundred yards in his rear, plunged into it, keeping his head down stream and with the ebb tide. I followed slowly at a walk along the bank for a short distance till I met a small boat being towed up-stream, the crew of which received me on board on the promise of a present and a share of the buffalo's flesh, one of them holding my Arab on land.

The boat, pulling three or four oars, was then turned round towards the bull, which, at a distance of forty or fifty yards from the shore, was swimming strongly, and on perceiving that we gained upon him, headed towards the river bank. I was seated on the bow, gun in hand; the crew, much excited, were shouting and pulling hard, so that we overhauled the chase in a few seconds when close in shore, and, sheering alongside, I fired, striking him on the back of his huge brawny neck, but missing the spine, whereon he turned sharply upon me, and the boatmen, dashing our craft

full upon him, he received the other barrel in the eye as he struck fiercely at me with his horns at the distance of a foot or two from the muzzle of the gun. As his noble head drooped the boat passed over a portion of his body, which was promptly secured with the towing line, and on the arrival of the elephants and servants was dragged ashore where the bank shelved, and there and then cut up and shared; the splendid head, tongue and some marrow bones were reserved for me, and the rest divided among the "Mahouts," boatmen, and the Mussulman villagers, who, after the manner of their kind, appeared upon the scene as soon as the knife had passed along the bull's throat, a conscience-quieting ceremony only, since the animal was struck dead by the last shot, which the old "jemadar," or head "Mahout," protested was guided by Providence, this being an enchanted beast of diabolical nature, invulnerable to ordinary bullets, the eye only excepted, as is well known to all men, etc., etc., etc. Enchanted or not, the lucky shot had struck full in the eye as the bull came at me, and penetrated to the brain, my aim being the broad flat forehead just below the line of the roots of the horns, the divergence of my bullet having been caused by the quick movement of the head in the act of striking at me, and I considered at the time that I had escaped most fortunately without an ugly blow; and I think so still.

We extracted thirteen bullets from the body of this bull, many excellently placed, but flattened out; others had entered between the ribs and done their work; while some were cut from under the hide of the shoulders, mere flat thin discs of lead with jagged edges. The bull, as previously remarked, was a particularly fine one, in the prime and fullest vigour of life, and his horns, measuring over nine feet from tip to tip across the forehead, formed a noble trophy, being perfect throughout as well as beautifully curved. I need hardly add that my dinner that night was a very late one when I returned to John Company's old Factory, and my slumber after it sweet and profound, and undisturbed by the ghosts of the Factors and Agents, senior and junior, whose

tombs lay around, covered by jungle, and split or overturned by the great strong roots of trees.

As contrasting strongly with the above incident the following may be related, also with a bull, and one almost as strong and stout as the last, but whose conquest was not so difficult. Then, too, I was out with three elephants only, having for my companion that day my ancient friend and chum, Dr. P., and we had been shooting spotted stags in the low jungles growing along the salt creeks of Bahireemootah in Hidgelee, making a pretty bag. About noon, when we were returning towards camp, a dozen buffaloes sprang up out of a "nullah," in which they had been lying, and made off for the open, unmolested by us till the master of the herd turned round and threw down the gauntlet we could not scorn. The bull stood still till we approached him within five or six score paces, and then charged furiously at my elephant, presenting a fair shot at his broad neck as he came on sweeping the ground with his horns. At twenty or thirty paces I took him behind the head, where it joined the neck, with a conical bullet from the 10-bore double Westley-Richards, and rolled him over like a rabbit; his head and horns were buried in the soft soil and doubled up under his huge body as it turned completely over by the tremendous impetus of his onward rush. He also was a fine beast; but his horns, though stout, were not particularly good, being too much curved without being of great length.

Very close to the spot where the buffalo took to the Megna, as has been related, a boar played me a similar trick under the following circumstances, but with a different result. He had been roused out of a grass field, and after surveying me for a moment took to his heels at a tremendous pace, heading for the river two or three miles distant. This was an extremely fleet-leggy hog with long tusks gleaming white and contrasting vividly with his blue black head. He looked about thirty-five inches in height, as well as I could judge, his exact measurement not being taken for the reason the sequel will show. For the first mile, over stubble and thatch-

ing grass, it was as much as my horse could do to keep close behind his heels; we then came to small "nullahs," in and out of which he went like a greyhound, keeping us at our very best pace. After another mile I caught him up on a clear bit of ground, and, digging in the spurs, ranged up alongside and struck him on the back, retaining the spear in my hand. The boar followed me with angry grunts a short distance, and as I wheeled round to face him again, jumped into a "nullah," down which he sped towards the river at his utmost stretch, and into which I could not take my horse, it being narrow as well as deep. Along this the boar flew for some time, and then bounded out of it at the further side, with the object, I think, of ascertaining where his pursuer might be. Catching sight of me he shot into a net-work of small tidal creeks, from which I was unable to force him, and on nearing the Megna he raced along its bank for a few seconds, and just as I was hoping to obtain a second spear, he sprang into the stream, heading clean away from shore as with the intention of making the opposite bank in the Backergunge district, distant some eight miles; but whether he succeeded in doing that, landed in Shahazpoor a score of miles below, or regained the shore lower down, I never knew; possibly he furnished a midday meal to some hungry shark or crocodile; but I declare on the honour of a baffled and deluded man, that that swine turned a look upon me over his shoulder as he struck out, with such a twinkle in his eye as might, with a very little stretch of imagination, be called a wink. And so I saw him no more after I had, with uplifted hat, wished him a safe and pleasant voyage.





CHAPTER X.

Buffalo and Buffalo-hunting and Shooting, *continued*—Spearing Buffaloes on Horseback—Good Hunting Countries—Heads and Horns—A Giant Bull—Wounded Bull beats off a Tiger—Tiger and Crocodile—Stalking Buffaloes in Open Country—Fatal Accidents common—Defeated by a Crafty and Savage Old Bull—A Narrow Escape—A Novel and Exhilarating Sensation—Wild Cattle—Cyclones and their Effects—Frightful Scenes of Death and Destruction—A Bad Time—“*Sauve qui peut*”—Good Sport.

WILD buffaloes have been speared on horseback by bold riders mounted on very good horses, but such instances are rare, and it may be doubted whether any one has repeated the adventure a second or third time. I have no experience of that sport myself, having neither the heart to risk the life of a valuable and favourite horse on the venture, nor the purse to justify the almost certain loss of a thousand or fifteen hundred rupees on the chances of a single chase. I can recall to mind one instance in which the experiment was made upon two bulls on the same day, when a noble Arab was killed outright, and the rider barely escaped with his life.

Old sporting magazines, as well as more modern books on Indian sports, are singularly silent regarding exploits of that nature; but as a matter of fact, none of them deal much with buffalo-shooting, whether on foot or on horseback. The author of “*Oriental Field Sports*,” who discusses at length the chase of every description of Indian game, tells us very little of that of the buffalo; but he extols the prowess and strength of that animal, and hints at the difficulties to be encountered before he can be overcome with the

firearms of his days. Major Leveson, ("the old shikarry,") altogether omits buffalo-hunting from his two volumes of "Sport in Many Lands," although he treats of the pursuit of almost every game bird and beast in the wide world.

There are reasons therefore for supposing that the pursuit of this very tough customer, on foot or mounted, was not much indulged in by our predecessors fifty to a hundred years ago; accounted for mainly, it may be presumed, by the excessively heavy and extensive coverts of those times, and the deep and broad marshes which then were everywhere common; though the comparatively weak guns and rifles might have something to do with the unpopularity of the sport.

There was splendid hunting ground on the "churs" of the Megna and Brahmapootra rivers; around the vast "jheels" and marshes in the districts of Nudiya, Jessore, Purneah, Maldah, Pubnah, and some others; as also wherever the manufacture of salt was carried on for Government, such tracts being much favoured by wild buffaloes, as well as by wild hog and deer: the country is still good for hunting, but the game has disappeared.

The stalking of these doughty champions used to afford us excellent sport in Noakholly, and in the low coverts bordering the salt creeks in Hidgelee and Balasore, where they were very numerous and savage, but nowhere in such immense herds as in Assam. Although game was abundant enough in those tracts, its pursuit was impeded by endless small tidal creeks, which could be crossed only with the utmost difficulty at low water, by casting boughs of trees and bundles of grass upon their muddy beds, and not at all at high-water, in consequence of their being infested by crocodiles of the most dangerous kind. In addition to the above drawbacks, these jungles were full of thorns, short sharp stumps, and mud-holes, which combined to make them as disagreeable and fatiguing to the stalker as any of which I have had experience out of the "Soonderbuns." Lastly, when in pursuit of spotted deer, we were frequently com-

pelled in self-defence to fire at buffaloes and wild-hog, losing thus the objects of our chase, through the attacks of animals not sought by us.

It is somewhat extraordinary that during the four or five years I shot over the jungles just described, I never once met with a tiger, and twice only with panthers; nor were their foot-prints at all common; and yet these coverts, swarming with their prey, appeared suitable in every respect for tigers, and in a lesser degree for panthers, which rarely inhabit low swampy thickets, subject to fortnightly inundation by salt water during the spring tides, almost all the year round; and yet in precisely similar ground in Saugor Island I have seen tigers' foot-prints almost as thick as those of spotted deer and wild-hog.

The buffaloes in these salt tracts were less in bulk and stature than those which roamed over the "churs" and islands of the Megna and Brahmapootra rivers, and they carried smaller horns; they were quite as vicious however, and not prone to flight when they got the wind. Their horns were not only shorter from root to tip, but more curved, so that out of several hundred heads taken by me in that country, I do not think half a dozen were preserved as trophies.

The finest pairs of bull's and cow's horns in my possession, measure, the former nine and a half, the latter eleven and three quarters feet, both having been obtained on the Megna "churs." The cow's horns are somewhat light, the bull's are extremely stout, and the skull at the top between the base of the horns, is more like granite than mere bone. The bull which once carried the latter, was an old ash-coloured monster of immense height and bulk, on which two bullets from a smooth bore well placed just behind the shoulder at a short range, appeared to make no impression; my stalk having been rendered easy by the presence of a herd of tame cows, to whom he had come on a complimentary visit. As the bull retired into high reeds without leaving more than a few drops of blood on his tracks about sunset, and as there were in them beasts more dangerous than himself, he was not

followed till next day, late on the afternoon of which he was found just dead; and it then appeared that he had the previous night or early that morning been followed and attacked by a tiger, which he must have beaten off without difficulty, since the marks of claws only were visible upon his vast shoulders, and none of fangs, proving that the tiger had been hurled off after his first spring with such violence as to be deterred from a renewal of the encounter.

The absence of elephants precluded any search for the tiger, which no doubt was not far off more or less hurt, and the attempt to search for him in such a sea of dense green reeds and rushes, hardly to be penetrated on foot, would have been probably useless, and certainly foolhardy. It was at this very place that a combat was witnessed between a fine tiger which had come down to drink and a crocodile of great size and strength, terminating in the former being dragged into deep water.

Stalking bulls in the open country, that is in country not covered with dense jungle anywhere, but dotted over with bushes, patches of grass, or clumps of trees—used to be a favourite pastime with me, when I had abundant opportunities of indulging in it in the districts of Noakholly, Tumlook, Hidgelee, and Balasore. A sportsman who can rely on his nerve and aim, may enjoy good sport in stalking these huge and savage beasts; but to do so successfully, he must be armed with two or more powerful guns or rifles—the latter for choice, and not less than ten or twelve gauge, and he ought to possess some knowledge of the habits and characteristics of the animal. Moreover, the utmost caution should be observed in following up and approaching the wounded beast, as it is under such circumstances that most of the fatal accidents attending this sport have occurred, and do still occur. Lastly, when charged, as the sportsman certainly will be on many occasions, and desperately too, he must hit in a good and proper place, and then he may tumble over his adversary headlong and dead almost at his feet, or make him swerve on one side or other.

Many serious accidents result from the foolish way in which Mahomedan attendants run forward on the fall of a buffalo to cut its throat before it expires. A friend, driven up into a tree by an infuriated bull, which charged and watched him, after firing many shots from a light gun, succeeded at length in bringing him down seemingly quite spent; whereupon his servant descended and ran forward, knife in hand, but the bull, springing up again, pursued and slew him, and then sulkily walked off the field. In this case a bullet had so struck the bull as to bring him to his knees, momentarily stunned or paralysed; but not having been a witness of the scene, I am unable to state precisely what occurred, but cannot believe that the buffalo's condition could have been such as to justify a near approach to him at that moment.

One of the very few Bengalee gentlemen whom I knew to be sportsmen, was the late Rajah of Mynah (a place not far from Tumlook), who used now and then to accompany me on my buffalo-shooting expeditions in Jellamoota, and in and around Sourabarea. Unlike the majority of his fellows, whose sporting is often confined to a caricature get-up as a European, he used to throw off his shoes and flowing garments, and girding up his loins, take manfully to the mud and water.

One day my friend the Rajah and I, finding a herd in an open swamp, contrived, with some manœuvring, to get up to it within shot, and brought down a couple, of which one was a bull, on whose fall one of the Rajah's followers, against our warnings, advanced, knife in hand, to cut its throat. Before the man got to the bull the latter recovered his legs, and seeing him hesitating, darted upon him in a headlong charge, flung him up into the air, and then kneeling upon him, seemed to tear with his teeth his body and clothes. The bull was killed immediately, but not before he had gored and trampled the life out of the unfortunate follower.

It has been remarked above that a wounded buffalo should be followed into covert with the utmost caution, one

of that beast's favourite tactics being a sudden charge from concealment on the near approach of a pursuer. Many casualties, arising from the neglect of this precaution, have fallen within my own experience, and as an illustration of this habit of the buffalo, the following incident may be narrated.

I was at one time waiting at one of the steamer depôts on the left bank of the Brahmapootra, in the Sibsagor district in Assam, for a boat downwards bound, and on learning that she would not arrive for two days, I looked about for some sport to wile away the time. My bivouac was upon a sandy spit, close to the main stream, cut off from the mainland by a backwater. The spit itself was almost entirely bare of jungle, but there was abundance of it across the backwater upon the high land, consisting of tall stout reeds, recently burnt, and bushes and trees which the fire had scorched or altogether spared.

Having my battery and three elephants with me (without a "howdah," however), I crossed the backwater the morning after my arrival, and explored the jungles around, as well as the great plain on the other side of them, without finding any game larger than hog and marsh-deer, and of these but a few, the recent burning of the reeds, still smoking and smouldering in some places, having driven away almost every living creature; but I noticed that buffaloes and rhinoceros were in the habit of visiting the locality.

The following day I was out again till noon, and bagged a couple of hog-deer, some marsh-partridges, and a buffalo out of a herd started from the burnt reeds. On return to camp, I found General Sir C. R., just arrived with some elephants, having shot his way across country from Golaghat without any success as regards big game.

The next morning we went out together on the assurance that our steamer would not arrive before evening; and since the General was particularly desirous to kill a bull buffalo, an animal he had never met with, we directed our course to the place where the herd had been put up by me the day before. We had now with us half-a-dozen elephants,

a number sufficient for the burnt and open jungle to be beaten, and I hoped that we might encounter a tiger or rhinoceros that day; but a diligent search of four or five hours resulted in our seeing nothing but deer, at which no shots were fired, till we turned our faces towards camp at high noon.

We were not far from the backwater, and were passing in line through some exceedingly tall scorched reeds, when I flushed a woodcock, which fell at once to my gun, and was secured. The prize was so rare in the plains that I moved towards the General to show him what I had shot, and after a brief interchange of sentiments on this remarkable incident, we moved on side by side; he in his "howdah," on a very large male elephant, and I on a pad upon a small female. In this manner we proceeded some distance, still through black and crackling reeds, when suddenly there rose before us, sprung seemingly out of the ground, a very fine bull with magnificent horns, which made off at score, receiving in his stern two or three shots fired at rather a long range. The bull was probably the last of a herd which had gone ahead, as evidenced by the numerous fresh foot-prints upon the ashes, leading directly away from us. Drops of blood and his plain spoor made pursuit an easy task, till we gained some dense green covert, into which he had plunged, and in which I had no doubt that he stood concealed awaiting our approach.

Having passed into this jungle a little way, we found the bull's tracks less distinct as they became mixed up with those of the herd which had preceded him; the grass, too, now grew thicker and greener. Accordingly my companion told his orderly to dismount from the "khawas" behind him, and to take up the trail, which he did most readily. The soldier was a Ghoorka, well up to the work in hand, and he followed the track, moving slowly in front of the huge elephant, and only a yard or two ahead of it. At this point I advised the General to take up the man again, as he ran a great risk of being seriously hurt by a sudden charge; but this was not

done, and we advanced a few steps further, the tracker, stooping low, with his right index finger pointed to the ground, followed the buffalo's line of retreat. I was on my little elephant on my companion's right, almost touching the side of his big tusker, and the Ghoorka was leading a pace or two in advance in the manner and attitude described, when in a moment, without a warning sound or movement, the bull was on the man, who nimbly ran between the elephant's legs, and thus saved his life. In his fierce rush the bull came upon the big elephant, which received him on the points of his long tusks and hurled him backwards; in the next instant I was lying face downwards, clasping the waist of my "Mahout," who fell forward over his elephant's head; another instant, and the bull was gone to be seen no more by us.

When his tall elephant bowed his head to meet the bull's charge upon the points of his tusks, Sir C. R. was pitched forward almost clean out of his "howdah," and before he could recover himself our crafty foe had disappeared. As for the writer, he had enough to occupy him in his efforts to keep his seat to take any interest in other matters, thankful that his elephant had not been capsized altogether, and himself and "Mahout" cast headlong upon the buffalo's horns. Both elephants received wounds from the bull, but of no serious nature, and after a fruitless search for him, we returned to camp, to see the smoke from the funnel of the steamer, which an hour later took us off our little sand-bank, R. wiser for his short experience of buffaloes, and I well content with the day's adventures, the shooting of the woodcock in such a locality forming, in my eyes, the best part of it. The bull having rapidly passed through the jungle in which he encountered us, went out into the plain beyond, and no doubt rejoined the herd.

It appeared afterwards that Sir C. R., being the inventor of a new bullet, was particularly anxious to try its merits upon a buffalo or other pachyderm, but the irregular and unjustifiable behaviour of our late adversary demolished his hopes on the very point of fruition. Does a bull buffalo

chuckle? Can he laugh and wink? For if he can enjoy a joke, that bull had a good one to tell his friends.

My ancient chum and comrade P. and I were on another occasion making a tour of inspection along a narrow tract, on which salt was being manufactured for Government between Kedgerree and the mouth of the Huldee river; and our daily practice was to walk after an early breakfast through the salt-lands to our next camp, reaching it shortly after noon. In this manner, combining business with pleasure, we obtained the best information regarding the game in the country, and generally made a fair bag of a miscellaneous sort every day. On the day to which I now particularly allude we left camp betimes, carrying as usual our cold breakfast, guns and rifles, together with the necessary attendants. It being then the cold season, we could spend the whole day in the open air if we chose, without being incommoded by the heat; and thus we had a pleasant time, eating and drinking when hungry or thirsty, in the shade of some tree, or resting for a while beside a lotus-covered pond, we smoked the cheroot of meditation. On the previous day we had found a large herd of buffaloes, out of which we had secured four, but had lost the master bull, which had gone off wounded with the rest in a southerly direction, the course taken by ourselves this day.

Where the country was not an open plain, it was clothed with a jungle of trees, tamarisk bushes, and grass, nowhere so dense as to be impervious to men on foot; and there were to be met with then a good many wild buffaloes and hogs, a few spotted deer, and a panther occasionally, besides an abundance of hares, black partridge, plover, and other birds. In the course of the morning we had struck the trail of the herd encountered the day before, and as it led southwards, as did our own course, we stuck to it, though it showed plainly that the animals had gone on at a rapid pace, and might therefore have altogether deserted that part of the country. Up to near noon, when not far from our next halting-place, we saw nothing of the herd we followed, and we were walking leisurely through a comparatively open

piece of grass and bushes, my companion, some thirty or forty yards to my left, and rather behind, when suddenly up rose a bull from a cluster of bushes beyond P., and at once made at him most viciously. Startled by the unexpected charge, P. fired an ineffectual shot, and the next moment he would probably have been tossed into the air had not a two and a-half ounce steel-tipped conical bullet from my rifle struck the bull fairly between the eyes, and cast him dead on the earth.

This proved to be the bull wounded on the preceding day, whose head and horns we had coveted. Having received a shot in an extremely delicate part of his person, and suffered much pain from the wound, the bull naturally was both savage and vindictive. Deserving us from his lair before we were able to make out his form as it lay in the tangled grass and bushes, he had no doubt calculated on making an example of us. The head was retained by P., who used occasionally to regard it with serious attention, as if he were calculating the probable results of impact between it and his portly person, adding a high momentum to the former prior to collision.

I may add that next day we again found the herd, and killed two more bulls out of it, allowing the rest to go; and, in addition, we bagged two spotted stags, and a very fine panther of the grass variety.

P. and I had another adventure with buffaloes, which may be recorded as something out of the common kind.

Shooting upon our elephants in Erinch, in the Hidgelee country, we came upon a wide plain, in the midst of which a herd of seventy or eighty buffaloes were grazing or reposing. The time being early morning in the cold season, a mist hung over the low ground, which magnified the forms of the animals to truly gigantic proportions.

This herd was known to us as extremely wild, it having been frequently disturbed and fired upon, and we knew too that there was no hope of our approaching it within rifle range on the bare plain; but as its usual line of retreat into covert was also known to us, there was a way of circum-

venting it that was promptly adopted after a few seconds of consultation.

Dismounting from our "howdahs" when we were fully half-a-mile from the herd, the "Mahouts" were instructed to sweep round far away to the west, while P. and I, with two gun-bearers, crawled up to a little mound standing out in the plain a good-half mile east of the herd, and on the direct line of retreat to the tree jungle further east, into which the buffaloes fled generally on being alarmed. The "Mahouts" were told that when a hat was held up above the mound they were to advance eastward slowly and in a thin line. Having gained the mound undetected by the herd, which was watching the apparent retirement of its enemies, we found behind it sufficient cover till the buffaloes should be driven up to and around it; and we arranged that in the event of their dividing, P. should take care of those on the north side, while those on the south should receive my attentions.

Patiently we sat for half-an-hour while the elephants got round to the point desired, and the signal for their advance was quietly given, and then we watched the slow advance of the elephants with anxiety, as the success of our ruse might be marred by the flight of the buffaloes north or south; but the beaters did their duty well, keeping their flanks a little advanced, and so approached the herd in a crescent form within three or four hundred yards of it before such animals as were grazing ceased to do so, and those which were lying down sprang up, and all stared curiously at the objects coming on, and looming monstrously large in the morning mist. A few minutes afterwards the outlying beasts closed upon the centre of the herd, while the master bull and two or three old cows moved forward to reconnoitre, snuffing the air with outstretched necks. A couple of shots now fired from the "howdahs" caused the bull and his companions to retire and join the herd, and when the shots were followed by two more, the buffaloes bore down directly upon us in a close mob, increasing their pace till they tore past us in a tornado of hoofs and horns. As the animals passed us on

both sides of the mound, two bulls dropped to the right and left of my big rifle, shot through and through behind the shoulders at short range, and two others carried away mortal wounds from the second, a lighter weapon; meanwhile P. had dispatched a cow with two bullets, and wounded another.

The sensation of being in the very midst of a mob of such savage and powerful beasts was exhilarating, both from the novelty of our situation and its dangerous exposure to the attacks of wounded and partially disabled animals, which, incapable of following the herd, might turn upon us; true, there was that coign of vantage, the mound, but it was not sufficiently steep or lofty to afford absolute security, and it was fortunate therefore that we had no occasion to test its value. Had my comrade been armed with as heavy rifles as mine were, one or two more would have been slain. Our morning's bag consisted of five bulls and two cows; two of the former and one cow being shot in the covert into which they had retired, and the rest at our ambuscade and on the plain in the subsequent pursuit on foot of the wounded.

There was good buffalo shooting in "churs" Sidhee and Boodhoo, in the Noakholly district, before they were cleared of the tamarisk and tree jungles in which stalking was quite practicable in the dry seasons. These jungles gave cover to great numbers of buffaloes, and swarmed with wild hog; and they also sheltered some herds of wild cattle, fine handsome beasts with sleek hides of black, purple, chestnut and white; much larger than the tame cattle of the district, they were as wild as hawks and as fleet as deer. As a rule, they did not associate with the buffaloes, but grazed apart in herds of twenty to fifty, under the leadership of the most powerful bulls, keeping close under cover during the day, and coming out to graze in the open about sunset, to return again into cover shortly after sunrise.

These animals are the descendants of certain tame cattle, carried off the island of Hatia by the great storm wave which swept over it in 1827 or 1828, drowning in the course of an hour or two some twenty thousand inhabitants. The

story of this terrible calamity as related to me by one who barely escaped with his life, presents some strange features, the flood having poured over the island in the 'daytime when the sun was shining, and all nature was rejoicing in its bright warmth, and not during any cyclone or storm; it came too without warning or cause apparent to persons ignorant of submarine earthquakes and other great natural disturbances, and therefore filled their minds with the idea of a supernatural visitation.

In those days Hatia was more than double its present size, the northern or landward portions having been of late years washed away by the gradual southward and seaward sweep of the Megna, or rather of the great tideway which divides the island from the mainland. Although much of the surface was covered with jungle, in which tigers, buffaloes, hog-deer, and wild hog abounded, the cultivated parts were thickly inhabited, and supported a considerable 'population of cultivators.

My informant, a lad of twelve or fourteen at the time of the fearful disaster, resided with his parents in the northern or landward portion of the island, and was tending cattle in the fields about noon, when the dull roar of advancing waters first reached his ears. His statement was that no tempest disturbed the air or sea, but a fresh gale blew from the south, no uncommon occurrence in those stormy regions, where violent winds blow daily from sunrise to sunset at certain seasons for weeks at a time. The hour was that for the incoming of the flood tide then at the spring; and the impression made upon his mind by the sounds he heard, was that the tide that day was coming up with greater force, and with a higher and heavier bore than usual. Presently the sullen roar grew louder and louder, and he became conscious of some impending calamity by the wild and noisy flights of birds, and the terrified rush of cattle northwards, followed by the cries of the villagers residing south of his own home, whose houses had been nearly approached by the flood. Next he perceived in the distance a huge white-crested wave pour-

ing rapidly towards him, and then with a wild cry of terror he fled for protection to the nearest tree, among the stout branches of which he had barely secured himself, when the black and angry deluge of leaping and roaring waters swept by him with a force nothing could withstand; whirling away trees, houses, cattle, and human beings, as if they were no more than straws or beetles, he alone escaping death out of his family of ten persons. My informant used to say—for being in my own service, we often discussed these occurrences—that the flood subsided quickly, but in its rapid advance it destroyed nearly all the people and cattle of Hatia.

A strange fact in connection with this mighty storm earthquake-born wave is, that its breadth was so limited that the larger islands of Shahazpoor, then only two or three miles to the west, and Sundeepten miles to the east, escaped with comparatively small losses.

The great cyclone of October, 1852, buried the whole district under water, but though the damage done to life and property was far more general, it was nowhere so awful as that done in Hatia by the great wave just described, and if I recollect rightly not more than three or four hundred lives were lost, and those mostly immediately south of the station itself, according to my own observations.

The cyclone of the night between the last day of October and the first of November, 1876, inflicted losses still more dreadful and more widespread, and was even more calamitous in the Noakholly and adjoining districts of Backergunge and Chittagong, than was that of the 5th October, 1864, in Midnapoor and the twenty-four Pergunnahs, Calcutta included.

A curious fact in connection with the hurricane of 1876 is that by far the greatest amount of damage was done during the reflux or retirement of the waters which had been driven up from the sea into the funnel-like mouths of the Megna and Burra Fenny rivers. When that cyclone burst upon the land on the night of the 31st of October, the moon being at the full and the highest spring tides of the year due, an alarming rise of the water was naturally to be

apprehended. Accordingly when the flood made at nine or ten o'clock of that terrible night, while the gale blew with its utmost violence from the south-east, frightful masses of water were hurled up from the Bay of Bengal, and cast upon the islands and into the rivers named above, so that at about one o'clock in the morning of the 1st of November, the tide being at its highest and the gale unabated, the country, both island and mainland, was covered with salt water to the depth of several feet, according to the distance from the sea, but up to that hour no great losses had been sustained on account of the gradual rise; but at the time named the cyclone veered after a few minutes' lull to the north-west, and blowing with greater fury than ever, drove the heaped up waters in raging and towering masses back upon the doomed islands, and completely overwhelmed them in the seaward rush. Then it was that most of the mischief was done, the flood rising to five feet above the ground at the station of Noakholly itself, on the mainland, some ten or fifteen miles up a creek, and to five and twenty on the islets farthest out seawards.

It fell to me, as a matter of duty, to visit the scenes of this calamity, to report upon the losses, and to assist in restoring order and confidence; and arriving a few days after, I was able to estimate pretty closely the force and effects of this hurricane. The first thing to strike me was the general appearance of the stricken country, which looked as if fire had passed over its surface. Trees and all vegetation, whether drooping, all torn and riven, or entirely levelled with the ground, were black and scorched by the combined powers of the furious gale and the inundation of salt water. The next remarkable things were the weird and dismal silence, and the absence of all life, whether of bird, beast or insect; and lastly the frightful stench, as if all nature lay dead and putrid. So penetrating and sickening was the horrible smell, that one feared to inhale the poisoned air, for which cause sufficient lay around in the corpses which filled the ponds and strewed the water-courses made by the retiring waters; while the carcasses of cattle still more thickly covered the fields and

plains; but not a solitary vulture or raven appeared to feast upon the dead, nor a single beast of prey to revel in the banquet spread out for it.

A singular circumstance attending these horrors now presented itself. A week or more after death the remains of the drowned lay dried and shrivelled outwardly, with features plainly recognizable; in almost all instances displaying an expression of calm and placid repose, both in face and posture; distortion of features or limbs being rare, so far as my observation proved.

Then followed a famine of water fit to drink; a plague of noisome flies succeeded, rendering all food distasteful; and lastly and inevitably the awful pestilence, which destroyed more human beings than the cruel sea had done. It has been estimated that in the three districts of Backergunge, Noakholly, and Chittagong, more than sixty thousand persons were drowned in the course of an hour or two, but far more were carried off by the cholera which followed the tracks of the storm; and these figures are probably somewhat below the actual numbers.

The destruction of animals, wild and domesticated, buffaloes only excepted, was almost complete in the tracts most exposed to the fury of the hurricane; and, as might be expected, women and children suffered much more than men.

In the islet called "Nulchirah" we found surviving a score or two adult males, but only two or three women and children. In a moderate-sized pond in the same, lay sixty corpses cast into it by the receding waters. However terrible such calamities may be, it seems pretty certain that they will recur once in a quarter of a century, the three last disastrous ones, not counting those of lesser note, having occurred in 1827 (or 1828), 1852 and 1876.

It is difficult to suggest any measures by which such loss of life and property may be averted, or at least such as fall within the reasonable limits of the power and duty of the Government; the landlords and the people acting in concert might do much by digging large tanks or ponds, raising high

embankments around them, and planting trees which grow to great size and height; but they are too apathetic to combine for any such purpose, and prefer to risk their lives and property once every twenty or thirty years, to making the necessary efforts to save both in the uncertain future.

In the course of a conversation between the writer and some of the few survivors in Nulchirah, and in reply to a question put to the latter whether they would now migrate and make new homes elsewhere in safer regions, they expressed their intention to remain where they were, the soil being prolific, the rent moderate, and the rice crops heavy.

On the whole the bearing of the sufferers, almost all Mahomedans of the rude and rough type of Eastern Bengal, was resolute, and conspicuous for a determination to make the best of their sad condition; but they could not be induced in their own vital interests to remove the corpses of the drowned from the immediate vicinity of their temporary huts; their excuse being that they were not "Domes"* in the first place, and in the second that they had enough to do to bury their own dead, without concerning themselves about the remains of strangers.

In the course of a fortnight's travels among such horrors, my companion and I became acquainted with many revolting incidents, such as robbery and murder committed during the raging of the storm in its utmost fury; desperate fights engaged in by neighbours over the flotsam and jetsam at its close; men and women driven mad by terror; fathers of families left sole survivors; and other occurrences of the like painful nature. Among the troubles which befell us was the breaking out of cholera among our crews on the second day, but happily it ceased with that one case. Unable to touch the food placed before us on account of the flies and foul air, we subsisted mostly on biscuits, tea without milk, and weak brandy and water.

Should these lines be ever read by the brother officer,

* A very low caste of people, employed usually as scavengers, carriers of corpses, and removers of the carcases of animals.

whose ill luck made him my fellow-sufferer, he will, I feel assured, bear me out in the assertion I make, that the time we spent together then is to be regarded as the most trying and painful to look upon in our lives. The exposure, the coarse food, and frightful heat of May and June, 1858, when we rarely pitched tents, were bad enough, and Crimean veterans declared them to be harder to endure than the cold and mud of the first winter before Sebastopol; but while then we had compensation in the excitements of marching and fighting, in our November campaign among dead and rotten nature there was none.

The above has been, it must be admitted, an unwarrantably long digression from the far pleasanter subject of sport but the mention of those once famous sporting "churs," Sidhee and Boodhoo, has caused me to swerve off the course to relate incidents connected with them. Landing upon them in our tour after the cyclone of 1876, we found the fresh foot-prints of a solitary wild hog on the former, and none of any living creature on the other. I have not revisited those places since, but understand that they are without attractions for the hog-hunter and shooter of large game now, containing only a few pigs; but wild buffaloes and cattle are abundant upon the adjacent island of Jalchirah, and, of course, wild hog, which last increase and multiply in a marvellous manner under favourable conditions. There are some wild cattle too, upon one or two other islets at the mouth of the Megna.

This wild beef was excellent during the cold weather months, but unfit for the table at other seasons, on account of a salt and bitter flavour. Throughout the cold season the flesh of a young bull or heifer was esteemed preferable to butcher's beef, and that of a barren cow was still better; the peculiarity of the wild beef being a slight game or venison taste.

The pursuit of these wild cattle was only attractive on account of their extreme wariness, and also, perhaps, because they were found where wild buffaloes and hog were very

abundant, and kept us always on the look-out for a charge. In the course of one day, L., of the Civil Service, and I, both ardent hog-hunters, were compelled, in self-defence, to shoot six boars when stalking buffalo and wild cattle through low tree and tamarisk jungle on Sidhee, such compulsory slaughter being as repugnant to us as shooting a fox or spearing a sow.

A careful observation of the wind and great silence were necessary to obtain shots at the wild cattle, the old cows being extremely vigilant, while the bulls were, on the contrary, dull and careless; the former, too, invariably led the flight, and the bulls protected the rear, and, if wounded or cornered, charged viciously. The calves were not easily captured, being both wild and fleet, and, when taken, pined and died in every instance coming under my observation. However, I am told, and can very well believe, that the herdsmen do capture them sometimes, and rear them among their own herds, but I never saw one of the reclaimed animals.

The voracity of the Mussulman servants, crews, and villagers is stupendous; for no matter how many buffaloes and cattle may be killed and made over to them, they never have enough to satisfy them. Our custom was to send to camp all the beef, and to reserve the tongues and prime joints for our own table and those of our friends at our station, but of the buffaloes we reserved only the tongues and some marrow-bones. Accordingly when one of the latter fell, and the ceremony of bleeding was got over in some fashion, more or less orthodox, by the first comers, a crowd of harpies used to swoop down upon it, and carry off every pound of flesh and entrails. A dozen animals have been killed in the course of the day by my companion and myself, and made over to our followers and others, and yet many stomachs remained unsated and asked for more.

It must be acknowledged that our camp and boats were not savoury after two or three days of such sport, for if the gorging all night long of meat just shown the fire was bad, the smell of the drying flesh, cut into long strips, was even

worse. To me the scent of the live buffalo is very offensive at all times (except when in pursuit), but that of the dead animal is so nauseous as to remain present in the nostrils for days after the hunting is over; in fact, it is nearly as disgusting as that of a high-toned old boar, although that is so offensive sometimes as to cause a delicate-stomached hunter to dismount and pour out his grief piteously upon the bosom of his mother earth, cursing swine in all their generations.

The wild buffaloes and cattle of Sidhee gave L. and me a taste of their quality one day about noon, while we were resting and refreshing in an open glade, after a successful morning. Our last stalk had been through a considerable stretch of trees and bushes growing thickly together without much undergrowth at that season, and it having been drawn blank, and we naturally concluding that no animals would follow up our wind, we piled arms and fell to upon our provender. A number of villagers and servants, who had followed us, intent upon buffalo-beef, had come up, and were squatted in groups, together with our gun-bearers and our three "Shikarees" and their dogs; some passing round the social "kulkee," charged with tobacco and burning charcoal, and others resting in the shade of trees, enjoying the deliciously cool northerly breeze of December. Having breakfasted, we were smoking the cheroot of contentment, when L., throwing up his nose and snuffing the air, remarked that he scented buffalo, and before our hands could take up our rifles, and without further warning, a great mob of buffaloes and wild cattle burst upon us, issuing out of the jungle behind, which we had last traversed from end to end. L. and I flung ourselves upon the earth, and escaped scathless, but our paraphernalia, in the shape of picnic baskets, dishes, plates, bottles, and glasses were scattered in a moment, as a perfect hurricane of snorting heads and thundering hoofs passed over us, and left us lamenting. One of our best trackers was handsomely caught in the rear in full flight, and was flung into a tree, from the branches of which he proclaimed his griefs in very un-bulbul-like strains. Another

"Shikaree" received a nasty touch of the horn of a buffalo in the small of his back, which doubled him up; others were struck, knocked down, or trampled upon, but, most fortunately, no fatal injuries were received, so that after all we had a hearty laugh at the wild scene of flight and dismay when we might have been lamenting over broken bones or something even more serious.

It is probable that these herds had been passing athwart the wind in the tree covert behind our backs, and scenting and possibly hearing us, about the time L.'s nose gave warning, they had, in a fit of rage or fear, dashed straight at and over us. The few shots fired hurriedly at the last of the flying animals had no visible effect.

Comparing the advantages of one with another, perhaps the country along the sea-coast of Balasore is about the best for stalking, it being open and yet offering sufficient cover for approaching within easy range; besides, it affords shots at spotted deer, black buck, wild fowl of all kinds, partridges and jungle-fowl. The right bank of the Soobunreekha, from above Jellaisur to the sea, used to be very good, and is so still, I believe; but I have not shot over it for ten years or more. In addition to all the game above enumerated, there were, and are still, no doubt, bears, panthers, and a tiger occasionally; but the coverts being thick, elephants are required to beat them properly.

Shooting with Dr. R. H. P. over a portion of the country last described, we had an example of what a steel-tipped conical bullet from a good, 10-bore rifle could do with so tough and bulky an animal as the bull buffalo. The weather being extremely hot, we had left our camp before sunrise, in the expectation of meeting with a solitary bull or two, and picking up a spotted stag. Some distance from our tents, we came upon a line of stunted trees and coarse grass, growing on both banks of what was then a dry water-course, P. taking one side and I the other, each followed by a single gun-bearer, the other attendants remaining some distance behind as usual. As we silently advanced, a loud rustling

warned us of the presence of some heavy animal which had detected us: then came a rush too heavy for a stag or boar, and a fine bull showed himself for a moment or two on my side before making off at full speed. The bull had been lying asleep in the hollow when our advance startled him out of his dreams, and his curiosity to view his disturbers had induced him to come out into the open for an instant, before he took to flight, presenting to me his broad stern. Having my Westley-Richards in hand, loaded with steel-tipped conicals, weighing two and a-half ounces each, I fired the right barrel in a kneeling position, when the bull was sixty or seventy yards off, in the expectation of breaking his thigh-bone; the bullet, however, flew high, and struck near the root of the tail with a soft thud, proving that it had entered a tender spot, unlike the loud smack which proclaims a shot in the shoulder or ribs. The bull continued his headlong course with unabated speed for fully a hundred yards, and then dropped on the edge of the covert, and was stone dead when we came up. Curious to trace the course of the bullet which had done such fatal injury, the animal was opened under P.'s professional directions, and the track of the conical was followed from the point of entrance into the body, along its entire length, till found lodged in the neck among the bones; the steel tip remaining perfect, but the lead much dented and jagged. A precisely similar shot from the same rifle had exactly equal effect upon a huge male rhinoceros some time afterwards in Assam.

I once spent a very pleasant and successful week in the month of January with E. I. S., the District Superintendent of Police, and his assistant, S., in the country between Sarob and the mouth of the Dhamra river, in Balasore. Abundance of game, delightful weather, good fellowship, and a view of the sea, combined to render this a most enjoyable trip, while the sport, as noted in my diary, made it one to look back upon with pleasure. We shot each day as we walked from camp to camp, our light tents and baggage being conveyed in small

boats down the Mutoh or Mutai river, on the banks of which we slept under canvas, most of our servants remaining on board with the heavy luggage. In this manner we made our way nearly down to the confluence of the Mutai and Dhamra, and the following morning we were out early to shoot over the ground between the former river and the sea as far down as the mouth of the Dhamra.

S. senior, an old "Shikaree," and a man "good all round," whether he handled the rifle, the spear, the sword, the foil, or the bat, had agreed that if charged we should fire one at a time, always selecting the leader. S. junior, a "new chum," had the option given him to fire as he pleased, so long as he did not do so before us, unless required or called upon to do so. Our young comrade had a day or two before secured a buffalo, "all to himself," out of a herd which we had severely punished, but it was "only a little one," unworthy of his bow and spear, and I fear he had only fired into the brown without selecting any special point for his deadly aim, trusting to luck for results; at any rate he was greatly elated, and in a very favourable state of mind to become a foot-ball to the next bull he encountered.

No buffalo appearing upon the plain on the landward side of the low sand-hills which stand a short distance above high-water mark along this coast, we ascended these, and from their summit descried a herd of thirty or forty grazing upon the bare plain between us and the sea, and quite out of even a long range from the seaward base of the hummocks at any point, or from any cover that could be discovered.

For a long time we watched the herd, which, unconscious of danger quietly cropped the coarse grass growing thinly on the sandy soil. When nearly an hour had passed, two bulls which had gradually approached each other as they grazed, commenced fighting, after some preliminary pawing of hoofs, and tossing of horns and heads; and presently the stronger drove the weaker some distance from the body of the herd in the direction of our ambuscade upon the hummocks,

where, completely concealed among low bushes and bunch grass, we lay intent upon the movements of the animals below us.

The victor having retired towards the herd, the vanquished after a while advanced towards it, but was detected and promptly charged by his adversary, before whom he retreated sullenly, and being overtaken and severely prodded, he turned and showed fight once more. The bulls were almost equal in size and strength, the pursuer no doubt being the master of the herd, and the pursued a claimant of the dignity of that position.

We now crept along under cover of the sand-hills, till opposite the combatants, and distant from them some two hundred and fifty paces; and on drawing lots, or by some mutual arrangement, it fell to me to try on them a long shot with my heavy rifle, which I obtained by a cautious stalk fifty paces nearer them; and then sitting down behind a little tuft of grass, I made my selection at leisure. The bulls maintained the contest for supremacy, regardless of everything but the business on hand, the cows looking on complacently from a distance, seemingly quite indifferent as to the issue. The younger of the two, as showing his broadside more than the other, having been chosen for the first shot, I put up the two-hundred yards sight and fired. Before the smack of the bullet reached my ears, the bull was down, the left barrel being held in reserve in case he rose again, but he never more stirred. Meanwhile, the other hearing the report of the rifle, and seeing the fall of his rival, retired some paces, and then turning, stared wildly around him. A few minutes passed in perfect silence, the smoke of the shot was blown away, and the surviving bull detecting nothing to rouse his suspicions, again advanced at a run, and striking his late adversary's body, lifted it partially off the ground, snorting savagely at the scent of blood. Obtaining a clear shot at the monster, I let drive the second barrel, and lodged a heavy conical just a trifle too far back, for the wounded beast trotted off head up and tail tucked in tight, to rejoice

his herd, which alarmed at length, moved away slowly towards the south.

The first bull was killed instantaneously by a shot through his shoulders, and high up. Sending his head to camp, we followed the trail of the other in the rear of the herd, and bagged him also, after a pursuit of a mile or more without difficulty, as he was mortally wounded, and weak and half blind from the loss of blood. Both heads were good, but the horns were by no means remarkable for length or stoutness.

After this we returned to the sand-hills to refresh ourselves with a drink and a short rest, and then stalking along the ridge we killed a spotted stag with two bullets, and S. senior a black-buck on the plain with a long shot; and then we halted for our mid-day breakfast.

Shortly after resuming our sport about two o'clock, we came upon a small herd, consisting of cows only, which on our near approach charged resolutely. According to previous arrangement we fired alternately, first bringing down the leader, and afterwards two more, before the rest turned and made off, we desisting from pursuit, not wishing to shoot cows. That day we were charged a second and a third time by herds of cows, and were compelled to kill those heading the charges, our plan of firing singly in turn proving a great success, so that no herd got nearer to us than ten or a dozen paces, before it was turned aside with the loss of its leaders. Shooting another axis and some birds, we reached our new camp at five in the evening, and on counting the slain, found there were bagged that day two old bull buffaloes, a young bull, six cows, two spotted deer, a buck antelope, and a few birds. More cows might easily have been slain, but we were not disposed to molest them, only firing on them in self-defence. A very large old bull escaped after we had wounded him, by gaining the heavy jungle at the mouth of the Dhamra, where it would have been as dangerous as useless to follow him among a network of small muddy tidal creeks.

It was remarked that we saw the foot-prints of neither tigers nor panthers during this trip, although there was no want of suitable covert, or of their choicest food; whether beef, venison, or pork. The country traversed was sufficiently open to admit of hunting on horseback, but it was so cut up by buffaloes while it was moist during the wet season, that horses could not have kept their feet on it, since it was as much as we could do to keep our own in running; this difficulty excepted, we might have ridden deer and buffalo all over it. It was in this country that a fine sportsman and excellent shot, Dr. C. B. C., narrowly escaped with life, a bull having gored him in two or three places, and inflicted some desperate wounds.

Our method of firing single shots alternately at charging buffaloes, had this advantage over independent firing, that each bullet, being coolly aimed, found a billet in some head, neck, or shoulder; whereas when two or three men fire together, there is a certain amount of hurry and unsteadiness, and a great deal of smoke too, which hangs before the rifles when the second barrels ought to come into play. The steady and regularly timed smack, smack, of the bullets upon the tough hides of the beasts, tells most effectually upon them, and shakes their resolution; and if to that be added the fall of their leaders one after another, the result will almost always be the same as it was this day.

An unusual occurrence noticed on the same occasion was the turning aside from their course, on the part of a herd of cows while in full career, to charge down upon us from a distance of more than a hundred yards, when they might have put themselves in a minute or two beyond range of our rifles, by holding on in the direct line.





CHAPTER XI.

Panthers and Panther-shooting—Several Species and Varieties—The Grass and Tree Panthers—Their extraordinary Boldness and Agility—The Voice of the Panthers—The “Sawyer” and his Nocturnal Pranks—A Desperate Set-to with a Panther within a House.

AMONG beasts of prey in Bengal is one called by some the leopard, and by others the panther, regarding the correct nomenclature of which much discussion has taken place at various times. This animal—*Felis pardus* or *leopardus*—is very common throughout the country, the “Soonderbuns” only excepted, where, I believe, it has never been met with by the sportsman or the woodcutter; and probably it is the only one among the predatory and dangerous classes which has multiplied of late years, being often now seen where it was rare thirty years ago; in fact, it has become so common and so extensively distributed over the entire country that its appearance should cause no surprise in any tract in which fields of grass or patches of thorns offer it concealment by day. For the increase of this truly dangerous and mischievous cat I will not attempt to account in this place.

Most authors and sportsmen agree in this, that there are in Bengal a larger and a smaller kind, some insisting on distinct species, while others admit only a variety of the same species. The former, in support of their theory, point out, or rather enumerate, certain marked differences in structure, colouring, and habits; the latter assert that such differences may, and do, appear in varieties of the same species; as, for example, in dogs, sheep, goats, etc.

So far as my own observation enables me to form an opinion, I should say that within the limits of the territories

of the Pasha of Belvedere, we have three distinct species, not counting, of course, the "cheetah," or hunting-leopard (*F. jubata*), viz.: first, the *F. pardus* or *leopardus* (whether you choose to call it panther or leopard), divided into two varieties, the greater and the lesser; secondly, the *F. (pardus or leopardus) melas*, or black panther; and thirdly, the *F. (pardus or leopardus) macrocelis*, or clouded panther.

If the designation "*leopardus*," or lion-pard, is to be understood as indicative of the appearance of the beast, it is an unfortunate one, because the Bengal pard bears no resemblance whatever to the lion, whereas *F. jubata* does so to the small extent of displaying long fur or hair on its crest, neck, and breast, and also some slight resemblance in its tail, which is thickly furred at its extremity. It seems, therefore, that the name of leopard should be applied in ordinary conversation to the *Felis jubata*, or "cheetah," alone, and that of pard or panther to the others. I shall abide by this rule in all mention of these creatures, and I respectfully commend it for the consideration of the learned as both reasonable and convenient, and likely to put an end to such unprofitable expenditure of words and temper as the following:—"Well," continued Captain Brown, "as I was saying, when the movement in the grass ceased, I walked up gingerly, my finger on the trigger, and then what do you think I found?"

"A jackal, I suppose," replied Green, who is rather jealous of his friend's claims to be considered a sportsman, styling him a mere sporting man; "a jackal, of course; what else could it be in such a place?"

"A jackal!" indignantly exclaimed Brown; "it was a leopard, a fine full-grown one too, and dead as mutton."

"I will bet you anything you like it was not a leopard," put in Green, eager to relieve the other of a few chicks, "and as you saw the beast, and I have not done so, you ought to give me long odds. I allow, though, it may have been a civet or other cat, and not a jackal."

"Done," shouted Brown; "I give three to one that it was a leopard."

“And nothing else,” answered Green, booking the bet in gold mohurs.

After this both marched off, as a matter of course, to Brown’s bungalow, where the skin and skull of a recently killed animal were triumphantly produced by Brown, and, after examination, pronounced by Green to be those of a panther, and not of a leopard, the latter animal never being found in that part of the country. The bet has never been satisfactorily decided, or any money changed hands in consequence, though made ten years ago, for each hero has numerous supporters that he was right and the other wrong. I should be well content to be the money-holder in similar cases.

Having laid some skins of the larger variety of the pard beside as many of the smaller, I have failed to detect any marked or unvarying difference in the shape, tint, and distribution of the roses, or spots, upon the backs, sides, loins, or tails, or in the ground-colour, beyond this, viz., that the skins of the lesser variety are spotted more closely, and have a darker general hue than those of the other kind, which are lighter in colour, and display more of the yellow-tawny ground, particularly about the head, cheeks, and neck, on which the spots are smaller and more scattered than in the other skins.

When roused in covert, the larger variety look more tawny and brighter than the lesser, particularly in grass or other jungle, through which the sun’s rays penetrate and fall upon the beast. I have seen a large panther’s head, throat, and chest look so pale and white as it glared at me, with the setting sun shining full upon him from behind me, that for the moment I have been puzzled as to what I saw before me; but under no circumstances can I recall any similar paleness and brightness of colour in any individual of the smaller variety.

I have been unable to satisfy myself that, as has been asserted, the coat of the greater pard is more glossy than that of the lesser, but I think the fur on it is undoubtedly shorter

and harsher, and more like the tiger's; nor can I, from my own knowledge, say that there is always to be found a ridge in the skull of the former, or deny its existence in that of the latter variety. Possibly and probably age and sex may account for the presence or the absence of this occipital ridge.

There are certain decided habits and predilections in these cats which may assist us in designating them truly according to their natures. Thus the greater panther frequents, and prefers, grass-fields, and other jungles resorted to by tigers, while the lesser is fond of canes, tangled thickets, and woods, in and around human habitations, and is more arboreal in its tastes and habits than the other, climbing readily into high trees in search of prey, or to elude pursuit. The larger variety may therefore be reasonably indicated by the name of the grass panther, as it is not uncommonly called in Bengal, and the lesser, the tree panther, though not the "lackree-baug" in Hindostani, as Captain Williamson will have it. Among the "Shikarees" of Bengal the grass panther is known as the "Sona-cheetah," or the golden coloured, from its paler and more yellow tawny general hue; for the rest, both varieties are indifferently called "kendooa," "tendooa," and "cheeta-bagh."

Panthers are bolder and more agile than tigers, but are less than half the weight and strength of the latter; indeed their boldness amounts to impudence, and their audacity to "cheek." When a pard has resolved upon becoming aggressive, his attack is made with astonishing swiftness; and his activity is such as to enable him to spring from one to another of the persons attacked, sometimes to the number of half-a-dozen, who will either be struck down in rapid succession, or grievously clawed and bitten about the neck, arms, and shoulders in the space of a few seconds. One evening fourteen men were returning together from market along a narrow path not far from my camp, walking, as is their wont, in single file, and conversing in high-pitched voices upon their ordinary topics, prices, condition of the crops, and their cases in court. As they passed by some scrub-jungle and tall

bunches of thatching-grass, a grass panther bounded upon the leader, and having struck him to the earth, flew upon seven others, all of whom he bit or clawed, and then calmly retired from the field. Now, this beast could have had no intention to seize and carry off one of the wayfarers to satisfy his hunger. Probably he was annoyed at their loud voices, and seeing a good opening for the indulgence of some horse-play, he suddenly fell upon them as described, and no doubt keenly enjoyed his little practical joke.

It is no uncommon incident in the sportsman's life to have a pair of these pards on the defensive before a line of elephants, showing fight in gallant style, rearing upon their hind legs to strike at the elephants' faces and trunks, or leaping upon their thighs and backs even, with every tooth and claw at work. My friend H. R. told me lately that one day at Alal a large grass panther attacked his elephants with such determined ferocity, and displayed such wonderful agility in springing upon them one after another, that they and the "Mahouts" became demoralised, and the gallant beast eventually made his escape. If I remember rightly, one of the "Mahouts" was wounded in this pretty encounter, and two or more elephants clawed and bitten.

The tree panther exhibits greater audacity than the other kind, and will enter villages and houses with the utmost impudence, and seize dogs and the smaller domestic cattle under the very noses of their owners, returning again and again if foiled in the first attempt. This animal appears to have no dread of man in the gloaming or after nightfall, and innumerable instances of the most daring attacks might be related.

Dr. P. and I once occupied, in the course of a tour of inspection, a small bungalow in the Bograi Pergunnah, then in the Midnapoor district, and now in Balasore. Combining duty and sport we enjoyed ourselves mightily in the jungles in the vicinity, in which were to be found spotted deer, bears, panthers, and now and then even a tiger, besides abundance of hares, black partridge, jungle and pea-fowl. Having

dressed and ordered dinner on return from one of our customary evening rambles we walked up and down the front verandah, while servants moved about the well-lighted rooms of the house, laying the table and bringing in plates and dishes. There was no moon, and therefore except where the lamps threw streaks of light through the open doors upon the ground outside, objects in the gloom and shadow could not be easily distinguished. As we paced the verandah we were startled by a heavy thump on its brick floor, and by a shrill yelp of fear and surprise from a pointer dog, which had been watching with keen interest the bringing in of our dinner from one end, and now ran up to us bristles erect and tail between his legs. Turning sharply round we descried, for half a second, the retreating form of a panther, which had leapt into the verandah, and having failed to seize "Blucher," now disappeared in the gloom of night like a ghost. In the same bungalow, and under almost the same circumstances, a large spaniel belonging to my successor O. was seized and carried off two years afterwards, possibly by the same animal, whose small and round footprints proved him to be a tree panther; but we never had the gratification of renewing our acquaintance with him, as we greatly desired.

Both varieties are in the habit of uttering a succession of coughing grunts or grunting coughs, not unlike the sound made by the working of a rough saw through hard and coarse-grained wood. This sound sufficiently resembles sawing to cause men lying within huts or tents to turn in their beds on hearing it, and to mutter "There's the sawyer again." It is not the ordinary voice of the animal, which is a deep grunt, nor the guttural rolling growl with which it charges, but a peculiar sound made when, regardless of concealment, the panther desires to create a panic among cattle, and to cause them to break out of their shed or pen, which he is unable to enter, or fears to do so, dreading a trap.

A notable instance of the impudence of the tree panther, and of the use made of this peculiar sawing noise, came under my own observation some years ago at Shillong, on the

Khassia Hills, when that station was not so large as it has since become, and when the houses were much scattered over a distance of two or three miles. Returning home about midnight, after dinner and a rubber with our friend G. H., I and D., with whom I was living at the time on a visit, had to ride fully a couple of miles to his house, along a road, narrow and unfinished in some parts and bordered here and there by pines and other trees. As we were on the point of turning to the left to cross the bridge on the road to the Shillong Hill, a panther started up from the shadow of a tree, and galloped off, seemingly much alarmed, and plainly discernible as it came into the light of the moon, near the full. Our ponies neither shying nor bolting, we reached home none the worse for the adventure, and turned in at once.

D.'s house was a new one, not quite completed, the drawing-room being still without doors and windows, and therefore open to thieves and trespassers; accordingly a "Chokeydar," or watchman, slept in it at night, and afforded protection by his presence.

About a quarter of an hour after we had retired, we were awakened from sleep by loud guttural sounds, resembling the sawing of hard timber, proceeding from the direction of the unfinished drawing-room, followed shortly by a yell of terror from the watchman, answered by a repetition of the sawing, apparently from the verandah in front of that room. The man, now almost mad with terror, called loudly to his master to awake and come to his assistance, as a tiger was coming to seize him. "Go to sleep, you fool," was D.'s somewhat unsatisfactory response in Hindostani; "it is only a bear or a pig, which will not hurt you."

Now D. was (alas! that I cannot write is) one of those men who never see or believe in danger till in the very midst of it; accordingly on the repetition of the sawing and cries for help, I thought it full time to rouse up D. to do something, "the bull being on his side of the hedge," or in other words, the panther being on his side of the house.

Knowing how to secure a prompt and energetic ally, I rose, and knocking on the wall between our rooms, called out to D. that the beast disturbing us was a panther; and that if he did not wish it to pay a visit to the nursery, he had better turn out sharp and fire at it, D. keeping a loaded revolver in his room.

After a little whispering and muttering, D.'s powerful and athletic form was heard moving off his bed across his room, and presently five shots were fired rapidly in the direction from which the sawing sounds appeared to come, followed by a complete silence, during which we turned in again, and the reasonably terrified watchman returned thanksgiving for his preservation from what he regarded certain death.

I think it may have been ten minutes after we lay down, that a great din arose from the south side of the house, in which direction were the kitchen, certain servants' houses, and the poultry yard and house, from which issued loud cries of men, and the quacking and cackling of ducks, geese, and poultry, proving plainly that our friend the sawyer had fallen upon them, after his failure to seize the "Chokeydar." The row made by the servants caused the enterprising intruder to retire after he had killed half-a-dozen ducks and geese and once more we sought repose; but in vain, for the "sawyer" coming round to my side of the house a few minutes afterwards, serenaded me in his peculiar style, apparently from a distance of a few paces beyond the verandah, which ran round the house. Now that the bull had come round to my side of the hedge, I began to feel personally interested, and not desiring a continuance of this sort of a concert, I snatched up a light small-bore rifle which stood in a corner of my room, and slipping in quickly a couple of cartridges, I made for the door which opened upon the verandah, and standing in the shadow cast by one of its opened folds, peered out cautiously, hoping to catch a glimpse of my gay and bold troubadour, before he could detect me. The grounds on that side sloped steeply downwards to the bottom

of a ravine, where stood a range of stone-built stables and some out-offices; and being partly garden and partly wild, they lay much in the dark shadows of bushes and plants of various kinds; the moon too had sunk low behind some dark clouds in the west, so that the premises on that side down to the bottom of the gully, were shrouded in a deep gloom. Unable to detect the form of the panther, I waited patiently for some minutes for a repetition of the serenade, prepared to make my acknowledgments with the most ceremonious courtesy. At length he was heard again, apparently crouching under some shrub eight or ten paces from the verandah rails, when, without catching the slightest view of him, I fired two barrels rapidly aimed at the spot from which the sounds proceeded, but neither growl nor rush succeeded them, and as I had clearly failed to hit the animal, though so close, and a perfect quiet ensued, I returned to my bedroom and closed its door.

For the third time that night we sought repose, and were falling asleep in the deep stillness of the night, when we were startled by a greater uproar than any preceding it, the angry baying of dogs now joining the cries of men. Snatching up my loaded rifle, I hurried down to the out-offices in the ravine, where my dogs ten in number, including greyhounds, bull-terriers, and terrier, were kenneled near the stables, and on reaching them learned that the most valuable hound had been carried off, although the servants declared the door had been closed; probably it was not barred, and was left half-open. The man in charge of the dogs informed me that he had been lying close to the door, with Baron's head resting beside his own, and the panther approaching stealthily had thrust in his paw, and clutching with it the dog's head, had dragged him out and vanished. The man stated also that the hound had been chained to a post as were all the rest, who therefore, were unable to attack and follow the marauder; and sure enough, there were the broken chain and collar!

Now, so long as the "sawyer" confined his attentions to

D.'s poultry, my patience and fortitude sufficed to support the affliction, but when he touched me so nearly as to kill a favourite hound, and possibly contemplated an attack upon my horses as the next part of his night's entertainments, my Christian resignation, and pagan philosophy alike vanished, and I felt that it was time to be up and acting; accordingly calling for lanterns, I scrambled down the side of the gully, followed by a Sikh orderly and one or two others, and within a hundred yards of the stables, came upon the dead body of the greyhound, mangled about the throat by which he must have been seized, after he was pulled through the doorway, and with an opening in the chest through which the heart had been extracted and devoured. Of course of the panther nothing was to be seen now.

I watched beside the remains for an hour or more, hoping that the villain would return to finish his supper, but to no purpose; nor did Goordut Singh, who remained after I had left, see anything of him that night, nor during the next when he watched again. After that we buried our canine friend where he had been left by his murderer.

D. and I concluded that this was the panther encountered near the bridge, and that it had followed us to the house, but such was not the case, for some of my servants who were sleeping in a little tent pitched on the side of the road leading down from the Shillong heights and rather above the house, had been roused from sleep by the noise of our arrival, and looking out into the bright moonlight had seen a panther standing on the road distant from them only a few yards, and had silently watched him as he hesitated to advance on our riding up and handing over our ponies to the grooms. They went on to say that the beast then lay down in the middle of the road till all was quiet, when he crept up to the house; also that, frightened by the close proximity of the beast when under cover of a tent open in front, they had refrained from calling out. The servants pronounced our serenader to be a tree panther, the footprints and nocturnal performances supporting the conjecture. Whether of the tree

or the grass variety his boldness and impudence equalled anything I have had experience of, except perhaps those of Bengali candidates for employment.

The first gruntings and "sawing" were designed doubtless to alarm the "Chokeydar" detected through the open doorways, and to cause him to make a bolt out of the room, when he might be readily captured and disposed of, the playful rogue declining to enter the room which might be a trap, with the man placed in it as the bait, whereas out in the open air and bright moonlight all was fair, and honest beasts had in them no cause to suspect mean artifices. Failing to draw the watchman, and warned off the premises by D.'s five revolver bullets, Pard took a turn round by the kitchen, and springing upon the thatched roof of the poultry-house, made a hole in it sufficiently commodious to allow of his dropping down easily on the inmates, of whom he disposed of half-a-dozen, before the cries of the servants induced him to make his exit by the same opening. Next he wasted upon me the serenade which must have ended in his whiskers being pretty closely clipt, and finally he went down the gully and had a little supper at my expense.

The following letter from F. D. W. gives a clear and characteristic account of an adventure with an animal of the same variety as that last-mentioned. My friend writes from Doolah factory on the 19th March, 1883, and I may here remark that were his strength and activity less than his pluck and coolness, that letter would in all likelihood have never been penned. "I came in here," writes my friend after a few prefatory lines, "on the 10th, to take over charge, and just before leaving my old factory about six miles off, a Coolie arrived to tell me that there was a leopard shut in here—in the bath-room. I started at once about ten o'clock, and when I arrived here, found all the doors shut and my guns inside. I entered by one of the doors on the north side, and got hold of a rifle, and was then shown the room on the west in which the leopard was. The door was closed (but not bolted), and looking in through the venetians, I saw

him crouched—partly hidden in a corner—partly behind the low wall on which the water jars are kept. There was nothing but a part of his back showing, at which I fired, more with a view to rousing him than anything else, and it had even more than the desired effect; he made a great noise and sprang right up to the top of the opposite door. Two or three of my terriers which had followed me meanwhile, having smelt him, had slipped in, and with a view to saving them, and also giving the beast a little fair play, I opened the door. Seeing me standing there he immediately made for me, and before I could fire knocked the rifle out of my hand, and it went off on falling on the floor. The report made him recoil a bit, but the next moment with a roar that made me feel very uncomfortable, and with one spring across the room, the brute had me pinned against the wall with one paw on my left cheek and the other on my head, and then he made a tremendous bite at my face. Luckily I had not turned my back on him, and as he bit I caught it by the throat and managed to hold him off enough to save my face, but not my hat, which was a very big “sola topee,” the brim of which he bit clean off in front. I forgot to tell you that some of the natives who had collected in and around the house, on seeing me opening the bath-room door to let the leopard out, shut the door of the room into which it led, so that I was boxed up with him when I let him out. This door was a little to the right of where he held me, so that while I kept him off with my left hand I managed to open the door with my right, and slipped out through the north room. There were three doors to this, and I took the west one, the leopard shot through the middle one after me, and an unfortunate native, the only one who had remained, ran through that on the east and down the steps just in time to be met and pounced upon by the beast, and when I looked back, I saw them rolling over together, the poor fellow getting horribly mauled. I ran in for my knife, but when I came out again the man had got away and the leopard was crouching under the steps. I sat down within a few feet of

the archway and fired a good many shots before I could hit him, as my head seemed to be going round after the smack he gave me, but ultimately a charge of No. 4 in the face did for him. It was a very small female measuring six feet two inches, but this shows what game little beasts they are. I sent the wounded native down to Calcutta, and I have just heard that he is dead, as it was too late when he went, and mortification had already set in. He would not go at once when I wanted to send him. The poor fellow was horribly mauled, all the sinews of his arms and legs being laid bare. The house in which this took place had been vacant for only two or three days; but owing to the increase in the cultivation of sugar-cane here, leopards are becoming much more numerous. I did not hear of this one having killed anything about here."





CHAPTER XII.

Panthers and Panther-shooting—Very numerous, and increasing—Spearing Panthers on Horseback—Comfortable Lairs made by Wild Hog—Good Sport—A Ludicrous Adventure—Hunting Panthers with Dogs—A Man-eating Minx—A Quick Shot—Difficulty experienced in obtaining Accurate Description of Animals from Natives—The Clouded Panther—The Black Panther—The “Cheeta,” or Hunting Leopard.

PANTHERS are so numerous throughout Bengal that they may be met with any day by the sportsman who is out snipe or partridge shooting, hog-hunting, or coursing, a field of grass or a patch of scrub or thorns sufficing to afford them shelter and concealment by day. The reasons for their increase in and around the small civil stations of late years may be many; such as a decline of sporting tastes among the European civil officials; the disappearance from many districts of indigo planters and factories, the men mighty Nimrods in their day, and their hospitable houses the frequent rendezvous of hunting and shooting parties; the augmentation of Native officials in almost all branches of the Administration, persons who rarely possess a gun or a riding-horse, and who would not face even a wolf or a hyena if they had either; and lastly, the extermination of deer and small game, the ordinary prey of panthers, which are now compelled to satisfy their hunger by depredations made upon the flocks and herds around human habitations, and consequently are more frequently seen than formerly, when they kept aloof from man in the dense jungles which then covered the greater portion of the country.

Both varieties are more plentiful in Eastern and

Northern Bengal than elsewhere in the Lower Provinces. A gentleman who has resided in the Maldah district eleven years has killed over three hundred, without making their pursuit and destruction a special task ; simply shooting them as reported from time to time in the vicinity of his place of residence, or when put up while beating with a line of elephants. Purneah, Dinagepoor, Rangpoor, Bograh, and Kuch Behar are particularly well stocked ; and any one choosing to make the pursuit of panthers a speciality, might secure a great bag in those districts in the course of a single season of five or six months. I have seen sixty or seventy skins and skulls brought in by "Shikarees" at a time for the rewards given by Government ; but I suspect many are brought from the Nepal Terai, where rewards are not given.

Panthers, generally of the tree variety, are sometimes speared off horses without undue risks to steed or rider, if the attempt be not made single-handed or upon unfavourable ground. In this sport the grass variety proves far more formidable and dangerous on account of its greater size, strength, and length of limbs. The spears used in this chase should be extremely keen, both point and edge, otherwise they are apt to glance off the loose skin of the beast, as I once found to be the case at the extreme peril of my life, when my good and trusty hog-spear slipped along the side of a tree panther, which I had pursued on foot after wounding it with a gunshot, and failing to pin it, I almost fell upon the beast, which, however, was killed by a better aimed thrust, quickly delivered, as it turned to attack me.

Hunting, as we do in Bengal, with the short jobbing-spear, we are bound to get close to our quarry in order to be within reach ; and when the panther is chased, it becomes necessary to approach him within easy springing distance, so that, unless well speared first, he is able to leap upon the horse or rider without difficulty, and in an instant may inflict severe and even fatal injuries.

One morning, some years ago, three of us were hog-hunting on the banks of the Ganges, opposite the little Civil

Station of Pubna. My companions were G., an indigo planter, at whose house we were staying, and P., who was on a sporting visit to me, and whom I mounted on that occasion. G., an accomplished rider, was fairly well horsed; P.'s delicate frame was animated by a giant's heart, and he had all the will to be a bold hog-hunter, without possessing the requisite strength. Riding under nine stone, P. was mounted upon my white Arab mare, a slightly formed, but fast little creature of about fourteen hands; G. had under him a good bay Australian gelding, over fifteen hands in height; and, lastly, I was on "Goldenrein," a chestnut country-bred gallo-way, a very handsome and fleet animal, but rather wilful, and more than rather hard-mouthed.

While we watched, thus mounted, spear in hand, the beating out of a small patch of bushes and grass within sight of the factory, a pair of tree-panthers came bounding out into the plain, a dead-level of light sandy soil, on which grew crops of mustard and oil-seeds, broken here and there by small stretches of thatching grass two or three feet in height, in which wild-hog made their lairs in cosy nests of grass. These tents, or houses, are constructed by the necessary quantity of grass being first cut down with the teeth or tusks on some selected site; secondly, by the cut grass being well trodden down under foot; and thirdly, by the greater portion being lifted with the snout and head and formed into a snug round dwelling of the size required, whether as bachelor's quarters or a family residence. The remaining portion of the grass, which has been cut and prepared, then forms the floor or bed, raised a little above the general level of the surrounding ground; and thus, except in very wet and stormy weather, when heavy coverts are resorted to, the wild hog is comfortably housed and protected from the sun, wind, and rain.

To return to our panthers. On breaking cover, they raced out at great speed, heads and tails carried high, intending to gain some other patch of jungle, or failing so to do, and describing a circle, to return to that they had left. We

laid in after them as hard as we could with loud tally-ho's, and overtaking them in a few hundred yards, caused them to separate; the female, turning sharply to the left, was pursued by a mob of yelling natives armed with bamboo-staves and blunt spears, while the male, a longer and lustier beast, to which we stuck close, made straight for the open, covering the ground with long bounds at an amazing speed for full quarter of a mile, when G.'s horse, with its superior stride on a level course, laid his rider alongside the chase, and gave him a chance, which he missed by a foot or two, and passing on was followed by the panther, which now appeared to realize what we would be at. The Waler escaped a mauling by the length of his tail, which seemed to be in his pursuer's mouth for an instant or two, and now coming up, I succeeded in pricking the beast in the shoulder, but he nearly struck the spear out of my grasp as I flew past him. P. next charged the panther, which went at him open-mouthed, uttering terrible growls, and so startled the "Araby Maid" that she swerved sharply to the left as P. leaned to the right to deliver his spear, and in an instant he flew over her head, and lighted on the ground close to the panther. Fortunately for him, Pard, disdaining to pounce upon a prostrate foe, bounded after the mare, and very nearly reached her quarters.

By this time the Waler and "Goldenrein" had become excited and alarmed by the angry grunts and growls of this, to them, quite a novel kind of adversary, and were being wheeled round to renew the combat. P. remained on the ground, lying as flat as he could, squinting over his arm with one eye at his late opponent now in full career after the mare. The panther relinquishing the chase now trotted off towards a grass field, into which he disappeared before we were able to overtake him.

The situation had now improved for the panther, but was much worse for us, since we could neither see him, nor guess where he was crouching. Rapidly it was arranged that I should charge through the grass-field, followed at an interval

of a couple of lengths by G., so that he could come promptly to my assistance if need were; but we saw nothing of the beast, and only noticed that a drain two or three feet deep, and rather more than a yard in width, bisected the field from side to side, and we naturally concluded that he lay hidden therein, ready to pounce upon us when we gave him the opportunity. The position was critical, for ignorant of the whereabouts of the almost uninjured beast, we ran the risk of coming upon him unawares, and being seized before we could use our spears. However, something had to be done, if we did not mean to acknowledge ourselves beaten out of the field.

Accordingly G. and I rode into the grass at a hand gallop, keeping abreast at a distance of a couple of spears' length, and passed through it without any results. Next, taking another line, we quartered the field, and had reached the ditch when "Goldenrein," springing up in the air, dashed madly over and beyond it, with the panther after us with a wound in its chest from my spear, as I thrust downwards at the beast on catching a glimpse as we flew over it. The panther, unwilling again to face the open, paused at the edge of the grass, and was there speared through the loins by G. and finished off by me, without any more trouble. This was a good specimen of the male tree, or smaller variety, measuring, as it did, seven feet three inches in length, and being very stout and lusty.

By the time our grooms and some beaters had rejoined us and dragged the carcase out of the grass-field, P. came up on the mare, which had been caught among our led horses and promptly taken to him. She would not, however, approach closely the dead panther, snorting with fear at its scent; whereas the other two stood boldly over it, "Goldenrein" sniffing and examining it as if to satisfy himself as to the points in which it differed from the pigs he was accustomed to run down. P. got out of his misadventure with a few bruises and a helmet crushed out of shape.

The consort of our late foe had meanwhile been mobbed

and run into a patch of wild arrowroot and brambles, from the midst of which grew a jack-fruit tree, on the upper branches of which she was lying almost concealed from her tormentors below, who were hurling clods, sticks, and spears at her, not escaping themselves scot-free, two having been scratched on the back and legs before she was tree'd. On our arrival a charge of small shot, fired by one of our followers, brought her down like lightning, and she made off at speed across the fields, but not without leaving her sign-manual upon another man, whom she knocked over like a ninepin, and also bit, but not badly. Being quite prepared we were after her at once, and overtaking her in the open, she was speared without any mishap beyond a skin-deep scratch on my galloway's off leg, from the stifle downwards. This animal was barely full grown, and measured only six feet four inches in length. As soon as the Arab mare recognised the beast in front of her she bolted clean away, and almost unseating P. over a bank and ditch, made for the Factory then in sight, where, on our arrival, we found him drinking shandygaff and reviling his steed. Poor P.! he has long gone down the stream to the unknown and boundless sea to which we are all floating down after him, more or less rapidly, like so many air or water bubbles.

It has been remarked that a panther may be met with when least expected, and it may be added that its ability to hide unseen is remarkable, as the following incident will show. In craft, too, this animal is superior to the tiger, and probably to the lion also.

As W. H. R. and I were one October afternoon plodding through green rice-fields, intent upon making a great bag of snipe, the season being at its best, we were told by a couple of Mussulman cultivators, who ran up to us, that a panther had been seen to enter a small bit of jungle a mile from where we were shooting, and they begged us to kill it, as it lay close to their houses. According to custom our bags contained a few ball cartridges, and luckily, too, R. had come out to the snipe-ground upon a young female elephant about six and a

half feet high, while I had ridden out on horseback. Thus being sufficiently provided with bullets to face the enemy, and having an elephant, though but a little one, to beat with, we followed the two men across the fields somewhat regretfully, since we abandoned the certainty of a good bag of snipe, for the chance of finding the panther, or peradventure discovering our informant's "bagh" to be only a civet or some other cat.

We were taken to a moderate-sized pond on the outskirts of a village, buried in the midst of palms, bananas, mangoes, and other trees. On three sides the pond (or tank, according to Anglo-Indian phraseology), was quite clear of jungle, excepting a little thatching-grass, which grew thinly in patches here and there upon the raised banks; but on the fourth, or south side, there was some covert consisting of bushes and mimosas, by no means dense. Foot-prints there were none, and the covert looked light even for a prowling panther. However, as our guides positively affirmed that they had seen the panther enter it, we felt bound to beat it out.

I took up a position at the south-east angle, while R., mounting the young elephant, beat up towards me, but nothing was seen. Therefore changing my position to the south-west corner of the tank, R. beat again with the same result; whereupon resigning all expectation of sport that afternoon, we sat down to refresh ourselves on the eastern bank, at a spot where it was clean, free from tall grass, and sloped smoothly down to the water's edge.

Cheroot in mouth I was lying at full length watching R.'s play with the elephant which was standing in some grass, at the south-east corner where I had posted myself, gun in hand, half an hour before, during the first beat. Now R. was (and I am glad to be able to add, still is) a light-hearted frolicsome party, and must needs try to frighten the elephant by making charges at her on all fours, growling most savagely. Failing to excite the alarm he anticipated, R. now changed his tactics, and moved backwards upon her with his head between his legs, uttering terrific roars very unlike those of any

known feline; and although he again failed in his special object, he brought about a result as unlooked for as it was ludicrous and startling in the extreme. When R. had approached the elephant in the posture described within four or five paces, and I was calculating in my mind the chances in favour of his getting a kick from her, up sprang a panther between them, and leaping over R.'s back, scuttled down the bank and into the covert on the south side, before he had time to stand up, or I to snatch up the gun lying beside me. This very unexpected termination to R.'s little game brought us to our feet promptly, and in ten minutes more the panther—rather a small one of the grass variety—lay dead in the covert, which it would not desert again; no doubt dreading to meet the awful object which had so frightened it in the open.

That beast lay crouched in a little patch of thin low grass within a couple or three paces of the elephant and R. during their play, and almost at my feet during the first beat; I think, therefore, that we were fortunate in coming scathless out of that adventure. Had the elephant been older and more experienced she would probably have scented the panther and kicked it, though it was to leeward of her. So long as R. roared and advanced on all fours the panther's equanimity was not disturbed as it had seen something like it before; but the unknown and terrific object which subsequently appeared proved too much for its nerves, and it bolted into the jungle, displaying every sign of the most abject fear and horror, incapable even of delivering a single blow in retaliation.

I have on several occasions joined in panther-hunting in covert with dogs, but the casualties among our brave and faithful fourfooted companions were so numerous in this sport, that I have been deterred from following it. Tigers, when roused by dogs, especially by small ones, such as terriers, will do their best to escape from their insignificant tormentors; panthers, on the other hand, invariably show fight, and, although bayed by half a dozen or more, appear to

enjoy the fun and to court the combat. I am confident that I have seen in the countenance and eyes of a panther so circumstanced, an expression of fun, diabolical mischief, and keen enjoyment, all mingled, and palpably displayed. Once I obtained a good run in the open with dogs before the beast went to bay, and the thing came about in the following manner:—

I was out one evening after jackals with a brace of greyhounds and four or five terriers and bull-terriers, which last I had put into some trees and bushes round a village, and was somewhat surprised by the long-continued baying which ensued, attributing it to the finding of a porcupine, an animal very common throughout Bengal, but rarely seen, it being nocturnal in its habits, and subterranean in its habitations. On riding up to the dogs, I found them “backing and filling” in a strange way, their ordinary practice being a bold and prompt assault upon all and sundry vermin; they seemed, too, unusually excited and angered, their hair bristling on end, and their movements exhibiting the utmost rage combined with some dread. As I came up and encouraged them with my voice the dogs made a fierce onslaught in a body, and up rose a tree-panther from under my horse’s nose, and bolted into the open fields, closely pursued by the terriers and bull-terriers, joined afterwards by the greyhounds, slipped without orders by their attendant, who lost his presence of mind, as is not uncommon in such cases.

The panther went over the ground with long bounds at great speed, holding his head and tail high, and keeping well in advance of the terriers; but on finding himself overhauled by the “long dogs” he wheeled to the right and circling round, returned to the spot from which he had started, and immediately climbed high up a tree. The chase for the short time it lasted was both exciting and interesting; as pursuers and pursued, we were all close together after the turn had been made, and the terriers came in by a short cut; but I doubt much whether the greyhounds would have ventured to seize, as the others would have done if they could have over-

taken the panther. Fastening up the greyhounds, and leaving the panther tree'd and "minded" by the rest, I galloped home as hard as I could go for a gun, and returning in twenty minutes with a double smooth-bore, loaded with bullets, dropped our feline friend with a shot through the ribs, close to the heart; and no sooner did he touch the ground than he was pounced upon by the dogs, the smallest of which—a Scotch terrier—seized his tail by the tip and tugged at it most manfully to draw him out of the low undergrowth into which he had fallen close to the root of the tree, while the rest tackled him by the ears and throat, he being too spent to attack them in return.

This little incident cost me rather dear, since the two finest bull-terriers died shortly afterwards from wounds received in a fight while I was away; the groom and dog-keeper stating that as soon as I was out of sight and hearing, the panther, descending among the dogs, had indulged them with a fight, but had been worsted by the little heroes, but not without three of their number being hurt more or less.

Both varieties are dangerous to human life, the larger not unfrequently becoming determined man-hunters and eaters; the lesser not possessing sufficient weight and strength to prey upon men, will occasionally carry off women, herd-boys, and children; but as a general rule, its depredations are restricted to the smaller wild and domestic animals, birds, and vermin.

During the year 1883-84, the inhabitants of the little Civil Station of Maldah were kept in terror by the audacity of a panther, which not only thinned their flocks and herds, but attacked and often killed men, women, and children, in the town itself, till at length it was shot by Mr. H. R., in the outskirts, among trees and bushes. It proved to be a small female, measuring, it is said, a trifle over six feet in length, and of the grass species; but its exact length not being recorded, I feel disposed to believe that it was longer by several inches than is above stated.

I was requested one day about noon to go out two or

three miles from my residence, to kill a panther, which had taken up a position in the midst of a considerable village, and was frightening the inhabitants from pursuing their usual callings. Arriving on the scene, my informants pointed out a little circle of low thorns and grass, not more than ten feet in diameter at the junction of two cross roads intersecting the village, which lay buried in deep silence; the owners of the houses either standing at half closed doors ready to bolt in, or peeping through small windows. Dismounting from my horse, I proceeded, gun in hand, to inspect the intruder's position, and if possible, to dispose of him where he lay; but I could see nothing of him from any side, or even by stooping low, get a view through the roots of the brambles and was beginning to suspect that I had been inveigled out on false representations; the men, however, insisted on the truth of their statements, declaring that they had seen it enter the thicket, and that the beast had made at them on their approaching its lair, from which it had not moved according to the statements of the villagers. Failing to detect any part of the panther, notwithstanding all my endeavours to do so, and objecting to fire haphazard on the mere chance of hitting an unseen object, I took a hog-spear from my groom's hand, and advanced to thrust it down into the centre of the patch which seemed hardly capable of concealing a cat or a hare, determined to rouse the beast if really present; and while my arm was raised for that purpose, I was startled by a sharp cry from my "Shikaree," that he had got a view from where he was squatted on the ground, peering into the tangled mass of grass and thorns. Springing back promptly, and exchanging the spear for the gun, I ran round to the "Shikaree," while the spectators hastened to secure themselves within doors, or upon the roofs of the houses. As my eyes followed the direction of the "Shikaree's" pointed finger, and his whispered instructions where to look, I caught a glimpse of the beast; up he leapt in a magnificent upright bound from the very centre of the jungle patch, and returned dead to the earth with a bullet through the heart. This was

a rather small male of the grass variety, seven feet and an inch in length, which had in the course of its nocturnal prowling wandered into a cluster of villages, in which daylight had surprised him. Previous to our arrival, he had given the villagers a taste of his playful disposition, in sallies made upon any men, women, children, dogs, goats, or poultry, which happened to approach his lair. He seemed, however, to have detected something in our appearance to induce a change of tactics; for, as long as he believed himself unseen, he lay perfectly still, hugging the ground closely, but no sooner did he know he was discovered, than with the pluck and alacrity of his kind, he assumed the initiative, and had he not been stopped at once by a fatal bullet, he would have been on us at the next bound, after clearing the matted tangle of thorns and weeds under which he lay in ambush.

The average native of Bengal, prone to exaggeration, and discriminating with difficulty the variety and distinguishing features of wild animals, is apt to mislead the sportsman, and to take him on a wild-geese chase; to him "bagh" is indifferently a tiger, a panther, a hyena, or even a wild cat, and the size of the animal he reports is a mere matter of petty detail, to be settled according to the power of his imagination, the amount of the expected "bukshish," and the gullibility of the recipient of his news. It is no easy task to extract from the informant a correct account of the general colour of the animal seen by him, for all dark shades are to him black, pale ones white, and the rest red or blue. One would naturally suppose that the marked difference in size and colour, between the tiger and the panther, would enable the informant to state positively which of the two had been encountered by him; but frequently such is not the case, and thus the eager young sportsman, who sallies forth to slay his first tiger, may meet with only the tree panther, or a cowardly hyena. The ordinary Bengalee villager, questioned regarding the bulk and height of the animal he reports, will describe the tiger as about fourteen hands in

height, and its head as large as a bath-tub, while the panther will be credited with the proportions of a large tiger. The only description on which any reliance can be placed, is perhaps that the animal is striped or spotted, the hyena falling sometimes under the former style, and the wild-cat under the latter; for which reason some allowance should be made for possible contingencies in all instances. At rare intervals of time, a more than ordinarily intelligent native will dig up a distinct footprint, and bring it in confirmation of his news; but such extraordinary brilliance is very uncommon, and when discovered, is eagerly made use of by Government, as a hook on which to hang a Cross of the Indian Empire.

It is somewhat strange that, whereas certain villagers, and notably herdsmen, either refuse to give information regarding the tiger which is decimating their cattle, or do so with the utmost reluctance, they exhibit no hesitation or disinclination in respect of the panther. For the smaller animal no superstitious dread or reverence appears to be entertained, so far as I have observed.

The panther, among the predatory beasts, is remarkable for his habit of getting into places where he ought not to be, and where his presence is as unwelcome as it is unexpected. Some are as incorrigible as bold, disregarding chastisement received or the presence of man. It is doubtful whether a tiger will approach a carcase on which rays of light fall from a lamp or lantern to assist the watching sportsman's aim, but the panther will do so without hesitation. So, again, the instances of tigers entering houses or leaping into boats are rare, comparatively, to similar acts of housebreaking committed by the lesser beast. A notorious man-eating tiger has been known to tear open the mat-and-reed built wall of a native house to get at the inmates; it has been known to frequent certain points on the banks of narrow streams, from which it could easily leap on board passing boats, and seize one of the crew; it has been known even to board a steamer at anchor; and I have heard of a gentleman being

carried off from the front of his residence while smoking his after-dinner cheeroot on a sultry moonless night; but such occurrences are uncommon, while the most impudent intrusions and depredations of panthers are not so, the smaller, or tree variety, bearing away the palm in this respect from its bigger cousin, as well as from all other beasts of prey in India.

Of the other two pards found in Bengal, the clouded panther (*F. pardus macrocelis*) is even more rare than the black species (*F. pardus melas*), and neither can be properly catalogued among the game likely to fall to the rifle in that country. I have seen only one individual of the former species, a handsome male, six and a half feet in length, shot in the Kamroop District of Assam, at the northern base of the Khassia mountains, and I have never heard of another killed in this country; but, as an animal very common in the Malayan Peninsula and Archipelago, it may exist in small numbers in the hill tracts of Chittagong, Assam, and southern parts of Cachar and Sylhet, like its compatriot *Pardus melas*. The solitary individual met with by me was a creature of lower stature, in proportion to its length, than the grass or tree panther, less powerfully built, and it carried a proportionately longer tail, with the fur longer at the extremity than elsewhere. The head was rounder and smaller than that of the other species, and the expression of the countenance milder and less truculent; more that of a petty thief or pickpocket than of an armed burglar; and lastly, its general appearance stamped it as by no means dangerous to the human race. Mr. C. T. M., of the Bengal Civil Service, a sportsman of wide and varied experience, has informed me that he once saw in the Nepal Terai an animal of the pard species with a bushy tail, and which the natives spoke of as a "hill leopard," rarely descending into the plains in the cold season. If a pard, and not a lynx, the animal may have been a clouded panther.

I obtained at Cherra Poonjee, in the Khassia Hills, the skin of a large lynx, the ground colour of which was a dirty

rufous grey, the spots or blotches upon it being black and irregular in form, like those of the clouded panther, and similar, too, as varying in size and shape on different parts of the body, but far smaller. The tail was shorter than that of a jackal, and rather heavily furred, but not bushy, and the ears rather prominent. I never met with a living individual with such a skin in any of my wanderings, though I have been told by the Khassias that such an animal used to be common on their native mountains, but that it had gradually become rare. Why? Certainly not from being hunted and shot by European sportsmen, since I never heard of a single one being killed. The skin has little beauty to recommend it, and is of no value so far as I can judge.

The black panther, without being as extremely rare as the clouded pard (or "Rhimandaban" of Borneo and Java) is not often met with in the Lower Provinces. As some proof of its rarity, I may state that, having communicated on this subject with fourteen or fifteen of the oldest and most experienced sportsmen now in this country, the result is that one gentleman (Mr. E. L. of the B. C. S.) has shot one and seen a second, both in Chittagong; Mr. W. C., of the Bengal Police, has seen but one, and that in Kundal, in Tipperah; Mr. H. R. R., who has killed between three and four hundred panthers in Eastern and Northern Bengal, has himself never shot a black panther, but was present when one was killed by a companion at Pallap, in Dacca, when three others of the grass species were shot at the same time and place; also he has seen that animal without being able to bag it—once in Dinagepoor, and once in Durrung, in Assam. The two oldest sportsmen in Bengal, Messrs. J. R. and W. H. R., whose varied experience is spread over more than forty years, tell me that they have never met with this animal. Mr. W. H. C., of the Bengal Police, who has shot constantly from Ganjam to Upper Assam, and in Orissa, has never met with a single one in his experience of twenty-six years, nor has Mr. F. W., of the same Service, who was for many years in Chota Nagpoor, as

well as in Northern and Eastern Bengal; Messrs. C. T. M. and E. V. W., both of the Civil Service, state that they have never seen one; as do all the rest. Having hunted and shot for nearly forty years between Ganjam and Dibroghur, and Benares and Arracan, I, too, can say that I have never encountered a single full-grown individual; but I once saw in a litter of three cubs two which were quite black, the third and the mother being of the common tree variety. This curious incident in sporting life occurred in Noakholly, on the borders of Chittagong and Hill Tipperah, and it proves, I think, that the black and tree panthers will interbreed, since it is highly improbable that the black cubs were stolen, or had been put out to nurse by their black mother. I have not heard of black panthers in captivity producing any but black cubs, though I presume that, if paired with the ordinary kind, both parents will be represented in their progeny. I may add that I have never noticed a single black panther's skin brought in by "Shikarees" for the Government reward, although, from first to last, I must have seen more than a thousand skins of the other kinds.

According to the above evidence it may be inferred that *F. pardus melas* exists in small numbers in the eastern districts of Bengal, in Assam, and in the Hill Tracts adjoining Arracan and Burmah; and that it is extremely rare in other parts of the Lower Provinces. It is heard of occasionally in Bombay, Madras, and Central India; but never in Upper India and the Punjaub, so far as I am aware.

Anyone who has carefully observed the form and movements of this handsome creature, and compared them with those of the common panthers in adjoining cages, must have noticed the marked difference between them on several points. The black panther seems to me lighter in build and less muscular than the others, its head smaller and rounder, and more like that of the domestic "Tittums" of our hearths and homes; less lively and frolicsome; and more prone to snarl like the lynx and tiger-cat, and to resent human observation.

Whether this animal ever produces other than black cubs ought to be well known to many persons, for it is common enough in the Zoological Gardens and menageries of Europe and India; those at Burdwan have had several litters, but none except black cubs, I understand. The difference of structure, organisation, and dentition between this and other varieties and species of pards I leave to the learned pundits of Natural History.

I have never myself met with a single *F. jubata* in the wild state, and have never heard of one being killed east of Palamow in Chota Nagpoor. It may occur in the Santhal Pergunnahs, and in the southern and hilly parts of Shahabad, but this cannot be asserted from my experience; nor have I ever seen its skin brought in by "Shikarees" in Bengal, Behar, or Orissa. This animal, therefore, can hardly be included among those likely to be encountered by the sportsman in this part of India. In Bengal it is very rarely employed in the chase of antelope or deer, hunting with the "cheeta" being even less followed than hawking by the wealthy natives of Bengal proper, whose sports are more commonly confined to the courts, civil and criminal, fields far more congenial to their tastes and habits; but in Behar, both pastimes are popular with the higher classes.





CHAPTER XIII.

Bears and Bear-shooting—Character and Habits—Three Varieties—
Shooting by Moonlight on Foot—Shooting by Day on Foot—
A Malignant Old Manslayer—Beating out Bears from Dens—
Driving Bears—A Remarkably Bad Shot—Small and Big Drives
—Circular Beats—Disappointments—Good Sport—Abundance of
Game in the Camp Kitchen.

IF the wild boar be among wild animals the gallant knight, the bear is certainly the country gentleman, with his retired and regular habits, his critical appreciation of the crops, whether wild figs and plums, or the mango, the sugar-cane, and the "mowah," on all of which he casts an observant and calculating eye while they are ripening for his benefit. Meanwhile he digs for roots and white ants, passing a life of domestic happiness with his consort and offspring, playing his rubber, and voting in the Liberal-Conservative interest, as opposed to those Tories, the tiger and the panther on the one part, and the advanced Radicals, the wolf and the jackal, on the other. If unmolested and allowed his own way, the bear is generally peaceable and moderately good-natured; but being of a quick temper and easily moved by real or fancied insults, he becomes at times unreasonably irascible and aggressive, and in such moods is a most dangerous and determined enemy.

Should an unarmed wayfarer meet Master Bruin engaged in looking over his orchards, or sauntering over his domain, let him step aside silently lest he have his scalp drawn over his face, or his features so altered as to be unrecognisable by his most intimate friends. I have failed to detect any appre-

ciation of a joke or of fun of any kind on the part of the subject of our present notice; in fact, except in the enjoyment of a keen scent, it is remarkable how obtuse he generally is, wanting even in the common sense which ought to tell him that an injury inflicted on his august person in front cannot be the *malfeasance* of a friend or relative in his immediate rear; and that his revilings and violent assaults in retaliation in such instances are unjustifiable in the extreme; but he is not open to conviction nor to arguments, unless they are presented him through a grooved barrel.

I have sometimes heard the bear spoken of as a rare animal in the Lower Provinces, whereas it is common in many districts, and it used to be very plentiful even thirty or forty years ago. The sloth bear may be found still in some numbers in Chota Nagpoor, Orissa, Midnapoor, Bancoorah, and in some parts of the Santhal Pergunnahs, and it is not yet extinct in Gya and the southern jungles and hills of Shahabad. The Malayan variety may occasionally be met with in the wilderness east of Tipperah and Chittagong, and another kind in Assam, the Khassia Hills, and Darjeeling. The sloth bear (*Ursus labiatus*) is much the largest and fiercest, and the most worthy of the sportsman's pursuit, and accordingly it is regularly sought where it abounds in any numbers.

About the commencement of the cold season, before the rocky hills and the "sal" woods, which it delights to inhabit, have been disturbed, the bear may be found close to villages and cultivation; and if sugar-cane or Indian corn-fields be within reach, he will be a regular visitor to them, collecting tithe and royalty, notwithstanding the outcries and anathemas of the despoiled husbandmen. About this time, too, Madame gives birth to two or three cubs, in the dry bed of a water-course or deep ravine, under some steep overhanging bank, not distant from gardens and cultivation, so that she may not be compelled to absent herself from her family for any great length of time, as her young cubs are extremely helpless, and liable to fall an easy prey to a prowling jackal, wolf, or hyena, the male parent at such periods taking small share in

protecting his offspring, being much occupied at his club and other places.

In April, when the wild-fig and the "mowah" invite them to their favourite repasts, whole families of bears may be seen in the bright moonlight, enjoying themselves to their heart's content, and indulging in uncouth gambols and horse-play; the smaller cubs carried upon the shoulders of the mothers, grinning and snarling from out the thick bunches of strong black fur which grow upon the forepart of the back, affording the youngsters good holds and safe asylums, from which they descend now and then to play with others of their own age, to hasten back on the slightest warning of danger from man or beast. At such times the hunter who does not consider his night's rest wasted in such adventures may obtain easy shots at short ranges, but to the young and enthusiastic it is not a sport to be commended.

Being in a part of Manbhoom where bears were plentiful, but not easily driven out of the hills, on which they dwelt in deep caves opening into each other, I was induced once, when the moon was nearly at the full, to watch some "mowah" trees regularly visited by them in the warm April nights; and the spot being less than a mile from camp, I sallied forth after an early dinner, and, with two attendants, took up a good position behind a parcel of rocks, from which half-a-dozen trees in full bloom dropped their sweet petals. We were suitably dressed in dark grey, and were armed; myself with two double 10 and 12-bore rifles, and my "Shikaree" and tracker with his long single-barrelled fowling-piece of a nondescript kind. The night was excessively sultry, and hardly a leaf stirred as we watched patiently behind our cover; it was long, too, before we saw aught more than a jackal or two, which loafed about between the trees picking up a few fallen flowers, and then trotted off towards the village. By-and-bye a pair of hyenas, descending from a rocky ridge close at hand, slouched past, quite unconscious of our presence, and these were followed by a panther from the same quarter, which slunk away to a "bund," or water-reservoir, on our

right, rather beyond a safe shot at night. About nine o'clock a sound of a peculiar kind struck upon our ears, and announced the tardy approach of the game we sought, and shortly after a she-bear and two cubs slowly sauntered up, sniffing and scratching here and there, and made for the trees farthest from our position, where their forms were only dimly visible. The mother looked in the shimmering light of the moon a fine sonsy beast, but the cubs were mere hobbledehoys, not worth shooting, and therefore we waited for something better. Whether the mother climbed a tree and shook down their food to the youngsters, or the latter climbed up themselves, could not be clearly seen, though we could hear them plainly enough from time to time as they fed on the sweet flowers. A weary half-hour passed, broken only by the distant howls of jackals, the screams of the little screech-owls, and the cluck-cluck of the night-jar, and then the unmistakable noises produced by bears in high dispute, roused our flagging spirits, the disputants seemingly close to us though unseen, but really a good quarter or half-a-mile away, the extreme stillness of the night causing voices to appear nearer than they actually were. Another period of suspense was succeeded by the advance at a run of a couple of fair-sized young bears, gay bucks on the spree, chased by an immense old gentleman, in high dudgeon at something or other which had ruffled his temper; however the sight of the "mowah" trees mollified him; so much so, that after an indignant snort or two, he condescended to settle down to his supper, after smoothing his hair and tucking in his frills. We could now see plainly all three of the new comers, the two smaller the most distant from us, and the largest slowly advancing towards our hiding-place up to the nearest tree, which he seemed disposed to make his special property, and which stood within easy shot at a score of yards.

As I felt the trigger of my big rifle with a light touch, I made sure of our irascible friend, but what about the rest? I was not inclined to be content with that one chance, but

desired at least a shot or two at those which had immediately preceded him. Accordingly I decided upon waiting to see what luck might bring about, nor did I do so in vain. I know not what actually took place under the farthest trees, but it seemed as if one of the last comers had in some way given offence to the old lady with cubs, possibly he may have made some unacceptable advances, or have "chivied" and hurt one of the latter; however that might be, there could be no doubt about the sequel, for in the midst of great outcries the two younger bears came shuffling up towards me on the left, and the last being overtaken by the mother of the cubs was rolled over on his back, and soundly cuffed as he probably well deserved to be. In my immediate front not twenty paces distant stood the big male, offering an easy broadside shot, and on my left front a little farther off paused the young bear, whose companion having fallen into the clutches of his pursuer, was receiving condign chastisement, acknowledged by piteous howls and moans, his friend looking on blandly at a safe distance, with his hands in his pockets as it might be, but ready to make off if desirable; a better opportunity therefore was not likely to offer that night. Taking the big old fellow first, I lodged a two and a-half ounce conical in his shoulder, and sent him down spread-eagle fashion with a long-drawn moan, and then turning rapidly to the left gave my young friend the left barrel in his ribs, knocking him clean off his legs; but as he rose again presently and began to turn round and round, he got the first barrel of the 12-bore rifle through his neck as a quietus, the remaining barrel being fired for the benefit of the others, which were now scattering off with many a grunt and "ouf-ouf" of astonishment.

The big male—a very fine specimen—never stirred and was stone-dead, the heavy bullet having completely smashed his shoulders and lungs; the other, a three-quarters grown male, groaned a little for a few seconds but did not move, being hit through the ribs in a diagonal line forwards, and in the neck close behind the head. The following morning

we found a few drops of blood on the trail of the others, and picked up a bit of broken bone which appeared to have been some part of a hind or fore-paw. Cutting down a number of boughs with our heavy knives and "kookree," we pulled the carcasses together and covered them up completely, tying a pocket handkerchief to a twig on the top of the heap.

Having re-charged the rifles we took the path campwards in single file, and had gone on our way half a mile, and were passing some low scrub, consisting of "karinda" and dwarf plum bushes growing among deep precipitous water-courses and ravines, when quite suddenly a mass of black fur appeared on the left of the path, and running across it with loud snorts of anger and surprise, made straight at me as I led, and upon receiving a shot bolted down a hollow and disappeared in its gloomy bottom before the second barrel could be fired except at random. Nothing more was seen or heard of this bear that night, but on taking up its bloody trail early next morning and following it to a wooded little hill, a couple of miles from the scene of the rencontre, we saw rather more of her than was at first agreeable, for she suddenly sprang up and making at a tracker who was stooping low and slowly moving on her almost obliterated trail, knocked him over on his back with a fierce growl; she then tore off his "pugree" with a blow of her pretty paw, and made off with it in her mouth, chasing the next man round to where I and others were tracking up what proved to be a trail more than twenty-four hours old. Hearing the cries of men and the angry growls of the bear, I looked up and espied the hunted and the hunter just clearing some rocks on my left, the bear within ten paces of the man, who turned sharply in my direction on perceiving me. Both came on at a great pace, the biped lean and active, keeping the lead fairly well, and making for the point where I and my gun carrier stood watching for an opening to cut in effectually, but this could not be done for some seconds, the man and bear being too much on a line for a safe long shot. Shouting to the pursued to run a little to his right, I advanced a few paces

to mine, and obtaining a clear line of fire, hit the bear with a conical from the 12-bore Westley-Richards, a powerful rifle, and brought her down in a heap ; but quickly recovering herself she resumed the pursuit, and when about twenty yards from me received a second bullet through her lungs, and collapsed at once. She proved to be a well-grown animal, but not as quick on her legs as she might have been had she not been wounded the night before, and become somewhat stiff and weak when put up again in the morning.

I sat some part of a second night close to other "mowah" trees, but got no shots at bears, and only one at a spotted stag, which I killed at thirty paces by a lucky shot through his throat, as he stood gazing in my direction, with his head and antlers in velvet thrown back ; the crisp bright moonbeams striking full upon his swelling white throat and dun chest. He was accompanied by three hinds, which vanished like ghosts at cock-crow at the flash and report of my rifle. On my way back to camp, a pair of hyenas and a ratel crossed my path, but were not fired at, as not worth a shot. The latter is by no means rare in Chota Nagpoor, Santhalia, and parts of Gya and Shahabad, but is not often seen, being a purely nocturnal animal, and living underground, and it is in consequence quite unknown to many who have long been residents of the country, and much engaged in its sports.

I have related the sport obtained during parts of two nights in succession, but they must not be accepted as fair average examples, any more than a man going out on the pad of a steady elephant into an Assam plain on a clear moonlight night and shooting a rhinoceros, a bull buffalo, or a marsh-deer stag or two, can fairly quote his experience as the average sport to be had in that way ; on the contrary, I have not found night-shooting to pay in the end, and am not partial to it. Now that I am an old hand, I would not sit up for anything less than a tiger, or for a gour over a salt-lick or water. Often while watching in trees bears may be heard and seen dimly, and yet no shots ob-

tained at them through the dark shadows thrown by the branches, or intervening bushes and boulders ; or at the best, only long and uncertain ones, leaving, perhaps, not a drop of blood on the trail. It seems, too, that this kind of sport is unsuited or uncongenial to men of our race, who prefer to meet the enemy, biped or quadruped, face to face in open daylight without ambush or stratagem. On the other hand, there is a certain charm for the true lover of nature in the observation of the movements of wild birds and beasts after nightfall, when alone the latter can be seen in their natural state, since by daylight, whether they are stalked or driven, they act under some fear or compulsion.

The ordinary mode of following the sport of bear-shooting in Bengal is to have a drive up to a line of "machans," or platforms, constructed upon selected sites, the beaters—some hundreds in number—driving a hill, or a "sal" forest, from one to two or three miles in length ; and, after the first beat is over, driving back again to the same "machans" from as far on the opposite side. This is by no means an exciting sport, except to young hands, to whom, all being novel, it is interesting ; but it affords openings to pleasant pic-nics and much social pleasure, especially in the cold season, when ladies can sometimes join in such parties, and more or less mar real sport by their charming presence ; for who can think of the bear in the bush with a lady in hand, that is, beside one upon the "machan" ; and the attractions of a tigress "in posse" count as nothing as compared with those of an actual lionne "in esse." A good tiffin under the greenwood tree, washed down with iced champagne or claret-cup, is a good thing in itself, but it is rarely conducive to good sport, and it most certainly causes a drowsiness afterwards in some, whose shooting under the most favourable circumstances is not remarkable for accuracy or quickness.

Far better sport is to be had in beating rocks, hills and woods of no great extent by a hundred and fifty to two hundred beaters only, while the sportsmen take up positions on foot behind boulders, trees, or bushes ; but there is this

drawback attendant upon this mode, that the rifles, being placed low, are fired at dangerous levels in respect of the lives and limbs of the beaters; whereas from platforms raised as they ought to be where tigers may be put up, at least nine feet from the ground, the line of fire is so much downwards, long shots over eighty or a hundred yards being rare, that accidents are comparatively few; for if a bullet miss and ricochet, it will either split up on the hard or rocky ground or fly upwards till its force is spent.

There is a widespread notion that the bear usually rears up on his hind legs in attacking, but, as a matter of fact, he does not do so, but runs at his enemy, and, knocking him down, both bites and claws him. Armed with strong incisors and fearfully long and powerful claws, he inflicts the most dreadful wounds. Should a man stand up to him armed with a "tulwar," or iron-bound "lathee" or staff, the bear may rear up to get a blow at his head, and I have seen them rise thus in low dwarf "sal," to obtain a view round, in order to regulate their own movements; they will rear up also to attack "machans" in which they have detected men, and occasionally ludicrous scenes may be witnessed when Bruin, wounded or made desperately savage by being driven out of his lair on a burning hot day, makes for a "machan" on which two or three natives being seated, armed with axes, swords, or spears, receive him with volleys of abuse and showers of blows as he endeavours to clamber up and dislodge them from their perch.

One day I was watching beside a jungle which was being beaten up towards me, and had just shot an axis stag, when a bear passed rapidly before me from left to right more than a hundred yards off, and was either missed altogether or only slightly hurt, for he did not pause for an instant, although he acknowledged the shot with a grunt. Seated upon the high bank above a little rivulet, from the bed of which a narrow and steep track rose abruptly to them, were an Eurasian Inspector of Police and a native "Shikaree" both armed with guns and protected by a breast-

work of thorns, who ought to have maintained their strong position, but the bear, making straight for it, regardless of their presence, put them to ignominious flight with a few surly growls, going up the bank with extraordinary agility, neither of the noble sportsmen firing a shot in self-defence. Bruin, having made up his mind to take that particular line, was not to be diverted from it, but he might have been killed with ease by a cool hand from such an advantageous position.

Bears are eccentric in many respects, and have a strange fancy for exploring the interiors of buildings which fall in their way, either in search of food, or merely to satisfy an intelligent curiosity; thus they will occupy a room in a remote or seldom visited out-factory, and will enter empty houses and dig up the earthen floor for white ants. I once had occasion to put up for a day or two in a school-house for native boys, the floor of which had been thoroughly examined for termites' nests by bears which must have come some miles at night for that purpose, for I failed to find even one, although I carefully beat every cover for five or six miles around. The villagers accepted these visits philosophically, and did nothing to discourage them, so long as the bears permitted the boys to attend to the lessons by day.

Where bears are numerous, many wood-cutters, herdsmen, and others are every year seriously injured by them, especially at the season when boys and women enter the woods in search of plums and berries, or to collect the flower of the "mowah," in all which Bruin considers he has vested rights superior to those of bipeds; but on the whole, and as a race, they are not malevolently inclined, and, like other wild animals, differ among themselves in temper and disposition. There is a notorious old male bear in the Manbhoom district, who for fifteen years has been the terror of the peasantry dwelling in the vicinity of his fastness, upon a high rocky hill full of caverns. This beast has slaughtered and maimed a great many people, and is as crafty and cautious as he is

savage and powerful. Refusing to descend from his stronghold on the bare suspicion of armed enemies being on the look-out for him, he will remain on the hill-top while his kindred come down to drink and feed; nor can he be driven out of the network of caves in which he makes his lair. I have been in pursuit of this malignant old villain on several occasions, but have only once heard him from the rock on which I watched for his descent; and that evening he must have detected me, though how I cannot imagine, since I took good care to remain silent and well-concealed. Possibly he may have scented me, he being not fifty yards off, as I could tell by the sound of his footsteps; or he may have seen or heard my comrade, perched upon a boulder on my right a good deal higher, for he was not as quiet as he might and ought to have been. However that might be, the bear did not descend from his lofty fastness that night at all, and an attempt made to cut off his retreat at daylight next morning proved unsuccessful, other bears only being seen.

On another occasion, a very young sportsman who was out with me met the old bear face to face on a narrow path among rocks and boulders well up the hillside, when both retired without coming to blows. So far as I know, this animal is still alive. If he be ever bagged, his skin should prove a grand trophy on account of its great size, and it is one well worth a protracted pursuit, for which I had not time, moving my camp almost daily as I was compelled to do.

At certain times, bears will congregate in some numbers, either for social intercourse, or for the discussion and settlement of family and tribal affairs. About three or four miles east of "Pachait," which dominates that part of the country, a hill springs from the rocky plain, with a gradual and gentle rise from its western base, to its summit, and then dips down steeply on the east, its entire length being about half-a-mile, and its breadth at the base, north to south, some three hundred yards. Finding many fresh footprints about this hill, a party of us resolved to beat it with a few score of

Santhals. Accordingly, a cloudy October morning found us at our positions; S. and I posted among some boulders within fifty paces of each other, and half that distance from the eastern base of the hill; two others, beyond our flanks, commanded the sides of it, and L. stood on the west, ready to account for any animals breaking back and making for the heavy coverts on "Pachait." Long ere the drivers had reached the summit, and while their cries were only faintly audible, I espied a full-grown bear daintily picking his way down hill, first round a boulder and then immediately in my front. Bruin took matters coolly and deliberately, pausing a moment now and then to listen to the sounds coming up behind him, turning over a stone here, and snuffing at a bush there, and in this way he may have descended fifty feet in the space of a quarter of an hour in full view, when the shouts of the Santhals, and the rolling of their drums rapidly increasing, he leisurely turned his hind quarters forward, and dropped upon his hind legs below a steep rock, and then made his way down a dry water-course, till he stood fifty yards off upon a boulder, from which I rolled him over dead to the bottom of the hill. As the echo of the shot reverberated along the hill, the din of the Santhal drums and voices became louder, and in five minutes two more bears showed themselves on the hill-side in front of S. and me, making their way rapidly down through the thick bushes. We allowed them to get out clear of the covert, then opening fire, killed one before she reached us, and the other after he had passed between us in his charge some paces behind us. Three full grown bears had fallen to five or six shots, and the beaters had now surmounted the crest of the hill, from which they hurled stones and anathemas down the sides, evidently seeing more bears on the move, which we from below could not make out. Presently rifle shots rang out on the right and far away in the rear, and three or four bears were viewed breaking back below the drivers, while a couple of hyenas dashed past us into the open plain. Running quickly to the right, I caught sight of a mass of black fur passing through the thick undergrowth

half way up the north side, which, after steadying my hand for a second or two, I hit with the right barrel, and brought rolling down, whining piteously, and with the left struck another, as it showed for an instant clearly between the bushes, but it passed on over the hill. My comrades were firing too, and I again obtained long shots at other animals, but none of them proved fatal; it was, however, a lively scene, the cracks of the rifles, mingling with the growls of the wounded bears, and the excitement of the beaters on the hill-top vehemently joined in by the drummers, raised a din that must have been heard by the sambur on "Pachait," and made them prick their ears. After this, we beat back to the west, searching the hill, but not a single animal, wounded or unwounded, could be found, the undergrowth being at that season exceedingly dense, and the caves on the hill both numerous and deep, and thus the three first shot, were the sole trophies. S. and I had killed two between us, I had killed one, and wounded more or less severely another, besides hitting two others; my companions had seen and wounded two more, so that there must have been upon the hill eight bears at least, if no more. L. saw a bear break away to the south-west out of shot, and he got some fun out of hyenas, which insisted on running almost into his "putwa," or screen of boughs and leaves, behind which he had ensconced himself.

We next beat a long rocky ridge a couple of miles south, where we lost a large bear through our own fault in the following manner:—The hill being some miles in length, we posted ourselves on the crest, and down both slopes about its middle, where for a little space, the bushes and "sal" trees grew more thinly than elsewhere, but it was after all a bad position, for we could see only a yard or two around us, the covert being very thick and close beyond that distance. The time was noon, and the power of the sun's rays very great after a heavy shower, which had fallen and wetted us completely; in addition to all that, the beat being a long one without feather or fur showing, we had become careless and drowsy, when without a warning sound, a large bear dashed

past M. and me, and escaped. For an instant he was nearly on us, as we sat upon the ground close together, and although we let him have four barrels we never knew the result, since we found no blood on the trail, and he was not put up again in the beat back to the same position. Of course, we ought to have bagged him; but with the ducking we had got, the subsequent excessive heat, and the long uninteresting drive, we were, I am afraid, more than half asleep. This bear must have approached us very silently, and having made up his mind to push on at all hazards, he charged past us most successfully.

Mr. Robertson Pughe, of the Bengal Police, who has had much experience in this sport, writes to me:—"Some years ago, I was beating a hill in the neighbourhood of grand old Parusnath, when a bear broke on my left. I ran to cut him off, and waited as he came shambling down. I had two steady shots, but before the smoke from the second barrel had cleared, he was on me like a shot, and seizing me by the left thigh with his teeth, he turned me round with a savage growl, and made off down the hill. He had bitten me deeply, and carried off two large pieces of flesh, leaving me bleeding profusely. Thinking he had done for me, I determined on having his life also, and had him driven up again, when he, too, sorely wounded, escaped into a cave, I limping after him as well as I was able; but before he could be smoked out, I became sick and faint from loss of blood, and had to be carried into camp, slung upon a 'sal' pole, and from thence eighty miles in a palki to my station, to lie six weeks on my back, the doctors pronouncing my escape a very narrow one, the femoral artery having been saved by a quarter of an inch. Since then, I have more than paid off all scores between Bruin and myself, and although in that instance I failed to take his scalp that day, his body was brought in afterwards by the Santhals. The following year I went again to the same hill, in the month of April, to have my revenge, when there remained but little jungle on the long low ridge to be beaten, and while walking to my post, a Santhal ran

up with the news of there being bears in a cave. I ran back cautiously, and made out two bears walking backwards and forwards in front of a den at the base of a great perpendicular rock, seemingly in great indignation, while loud aggressive growls from inside explained the cause of their anger; however, on seeing me they bolted in regardless of consequences, and indifferent to the feelings of their seniors within. Taking up my position below the mouth of the cavern, and only a few feet in front of it, I made the Santhals shout and dance above, with such good effect, that no less than five full-grown bears ran out one after another, and all got off excepting one, an immense old female, which I rolled over with a shell as she dashed at me. Had I been armed with a breech-loader, better results might have followed.

“The next day I visited the same place again, in hopes of sport, but the bears were not at home. As I was moving away, news was brought me of a bear lying asleep in another cave close at hand, creeping up to which in my socks over the burning rocks, and peering down a cleft, I espied a bear lying below at the mouth of an inner cavern, so close to me, that I could have touched it with the muzzle of my rifle. As a few steps would have taken him into the inner cave, I fired at once, almost singeing his fur, a perfect stillness followed, inducing the belief of his instantaneous death. However, to make sure, I stirred him up with a pole, and then looking more carefully, I noticed a slight heaving of the body, as if some life still remained, and therefore I dropped down into the cleft some eight feet from above, and with my rifle advanced at full-cock, I cautiously moved forward, the passage being so narrow that I was obliged to slide along sideways; a nasty situation, if Bruin had a fight left in him, as he could gain the inner cave only by passing over me. I approached to within a yard of him, and then perceived by his regular breathing, that he was very much alive; so luckily, as the sequel proved, I backed out a little, and climbed up again, and once more stirred him with a pole, without

rousing him up. Seeing the bear's foot hanging out of the outer mouth of the cleft below, I told a Santhal to lay hold of it, while I stopped his exit by the pole, in case he was not quite incapable of making an attack, and the man seizing the foot, commenced to haul away, and then there began a shindy, for as it turned out there were two lying together, one as dead as Julius Cæsar, and a second alongside, whose regular breathing caused the dead beast's body to heave as if alive, and the Santhal had got hold of the foot of the live one! I was stooping down over the pair of them, and had barely time to jump up, seize my rifle, and hit number two, as he dashed past me into the inner den, where I finished him with a bullet through the head. It took us three hours to pull the two bears out of the cave, and down the hill. That the second bear refused to move when the first was killed instantaneously is most surprising, but such was the fact. They are roused out of their dens with much difficulty, and this one may have taken the report of the rifle for a clap of thunder.

"On another occasion, also, I had a narrow escape. I had beaten a small hill in the Manbhoom district, out of which had come a sulky old bear, which I succeeded in wounding only, as he was rather too far on my right for an exact aim. Following him to another low hill, we tried to drive him over it, but he was not to be forced, and broke back through the beaters, with the intention of returning to his original lair. By this time he had become desperately cross, as I had too, before I took up another position behind a tree, close to the jungle, and within a couple of yards of a path I knew he would follow on being dislodged. As I always stand alone, I sent away my gun-bearers to mount some trees a little distance off. Presently out he came, and I waited till he should pass me, before I finished him at close quarters; but the same idea seemed to have struck him, for he seized my rifle and left hand, to which last he gave a vindictive crunch. I got clear of him however, and fired from the hip as soon as I was free, and knocked him backwards upon his haunches

grievously wounded, and stepping back with my discharged rifle, we stared at each other for a few moments, till he shuffled away with the Santhals in hot pursuit, while I reloaded as fast as I could with a disabled hand, causing me agonizing pain. As soon as my rifle was reloaded, I ran after the bear and finished him. His skin was a magnificent one, and served me for my only bedding many a night afterwards, when out after game; or when lying on it beside my camp fire, I smoked the pipe of contemplation, recalling the stirring incidents of my 'shikar' adventures."

There is a remarkably pretty little valley in Manbhoom, about five miles north of Chandil, on the Chaibassa road, and a mile or two west of it, which I have never found blank. On the north a high hill, scantily clothed with trees, bushes, and grass, slopes steeply down to the valley, which is hemmed in on the other three sides by low ridges more thickly covered with wood, while a rivulet—dry in the hot season—winds through its entire length in the midst of a low growth of plum, "karinda," and other bushes. Our usual plan has been to beat up to the summit of the high hill from its northern base, and down its steep side along the valley to its southern and south-western extremities, where we either stood, or occupied "machans" built upon the growing "sal" trees.

One afternoon two of us resolved upon driving the above ground for bears, taking up positions on "machans," my companion on the south-west of the valley to stop the flight of any animal over the ridge on that side, and I at the southern extremity, where the valley contracted, and a path led out of it into wooded and cultivated country beyond. Further on to our left was posted a native police officer not far from the inner slope of the high hill, where another path wound out of a deep dell over the ridge westward. Thus placed we commanded every outlet out of the valley, except that on the east, as well as the tracks along the watercourse which bisected it.

An hour at least passed before the cries of the beaters

and the sounds of their drums could be heard in the distance as the hill was surmounted, and half an hour more before the first of them climbed the crest and from it hurled stones down the slopes, while others crept along the sides where the covert was densest. The first animal viewed was a fine boar, which roused out of the bushes growing upon the very summit, dashed down headlong at a terrific pace, and gaining the valley, slipped out of it beyond the "machan," tenanted by the native police officer, who fired a random shot or two without effect. Certain shouts and exclamations of the beaters now gave warning of bears being afoot, and I caught a glimpse at the same time of some black objects passing into the trees and thickets on my right front, but what they were, pigs or bears, could not be made out, even with the binocular. When the drive had reached the base of the high hill, loud cries informed us that a panther was creeping on ahead, and immediately afterwards the native policemen on the platform were seen to be in some sort of a flutter, but no shots were fired, and all remained in perfect stillness in our vicinity, while the beaters approached us very slowly, threshing the jungle down the valley, and exhibiting by their cautious movements unmistakable signs of some animals being seen of which they had a wholesome dread.

It has been stated that from our elevated seats a perfect view of the dell could be commanded, and no animals passing along it towards us could avoid detection if they but shook the bushes, so long as they kept out of the rivulet; but its deep winding bed afforded them a concealed passage close up to our positions, and down it the panther and the bears must have descended, since nothing of them could be seen. The sustained rolling of drums, and the shrill cries and excitement of the beaters, warned us to be on the alert, although a complete silence and stillness reigned around our position. It is in such moments that a pleasurable feeling of uncertainty and excitement is experienced in this kind of sport, which otherwise would be somewhat tame and tedious.

My companion, a wary old "Shikaree," was now seen to

peer out of his perch, while the barrels of his rifle rose gently but just when I expected to hear the crack of the latter it was lowered again, and his "sola" hat was withdrawn behind the screen of leaves and twigs, and the previous dead stillness was resumed. A few moments having passed thus, I discerned moving dimly among the bushes on my left front, a form which I took to be that of a panther, and its pace increasing to a smart gallop soon showed it to be that of a large male hyena. Changing the '500 for a single '360 Express, I struck the beast as it flew rapidly past me, and laid it dead with a bullet through the heart within fifty paces. A barking deer or two now dashed over the western ridge unfired at, and we began to fear that the bears had escaped by a flank movement to our right over the eastern ridge, and that the drive for that day was over, the more so that neither pea-fowl, jungle-fowl, or partridge rose before the beaters; but the sport was yet to come.

Suddenly and silently two large bears came out of a little gully immediately below me, up which they had crept unseen in the thick undergrowth which covered it, and catching sight of me as I sat stooping low upon my cane stool, charged directly at my "machan," uttering loud growls of anger and surprise, offering beautiful shots as they ran up tossing high their heads and snouts, and glaring fiercely with their small malevolent eyes out of huge masses of black bristling fur.

With a heavy 12-bore Westley-Richards rifle in hand, I waited till the pair were within eight or ten paces, and then divided the two barrels between them, bringing down the first and severely wounding the other, which raced up to and past my "machan" with loud outeries. Taking up the double 10-bore I clean missed No. 2 at a dozen yards, the bullet grazing his back and throwing up a shower of earth and stones beyond him, but with the left barrel I caught him in the rear as he was on the point of disappearing over the ridge behind me, and sent him howling down into the ravine below, from which he was dragged up subsequently stone

dead, the first wound of itself being fatal, although not instantaneously so. The other bear had risen to his feet meanwhile, and was turning round and round moaning and growling piteously, but quite unable to make off, and he was put out of pain as soon as possible after his companion had been attended to, and ultimately fell dead almost touching one of the posts of the platform.

As the reports of my heavy rifles went rolling over the hills, the beaters redoubled their cries and the din of their drums, and presently advanced rapidly in knots of five or six, under the impression that the beat was ended in the death or escape of the animals driven up to us. I was in the act of descending, and had put down my rifle for that purpose, when a loud "ouh-ouh" proceeded from the gully below me, and a half-grown bear passed rapidly in front from left to right, escaping ultimately through the beaters over the eastern ridge, slightly damaged by one of the two bullets hastily sent after it by me.

The panther was seen first by the natives in the farthest "machan," when we observed them showing signs of excitement, but was not fired at as they said they left it for one of us, as may have been the case. My comrade saw something of the beast as it crawled into a gully leading down to the rivulet, and it must have gained the wooded ridge on the east, escaping in that direction, and was seen no more by either of us. Both the slaughtered bears being in prime condition, gave us a pair of fully furred hides and a fair amount of grease.

Such sport as there was that afternoon fell to me alone, and I should have been well content but for that unlucky miss, which lay heavy on my mind. The range being so very short, the heavy bullet may have flown high by two or three inches, and passed through the fur on the bear's shoulders; on the other hand it may have been one of those egregiously bad shots of which one is guilty at times, however unaccountable it may appear at the moment and afterwards.

Writing of bad shots, I am reminded of the remarkable

exploits in that way of one of the best of good fellows and horsemen, who has ridden his last race. D., who cared little for shooting, was out with us one day, when a bear, roused out of a rocky and almost bare hill, made straight for his "machan" at a leisurely shuffle. I was posted on D.'s left, near enough to witness the whole affair, and to throw in an ineffectual shot into the bargain. When Bruin was thirty or forty yards off and coming directly towards him, D. opened fire, and maintained it with spirit till the beast had passed unwounded under him, and away into the covert in his rear. An old Santhal "Shikaree" who sat with D., observing the heavy and well sustained fusilade as well as the ultimate escape untouched of the bear, remarked that, eschewing the use of firearms in future, D. ought to take to the spear or club only, at which the latter smiled grimly and told the old Maujee that he quite agreed with him.

Time passes tediously in big beats, and especially is such the case in those huge circular drives to which native chiefs and landowners are addicted. These last often embrace a wooded and hilly area of many square miles, two to four thousand beaters driving coverts for four or five miles towards the centre, forming an immense circle at first in loose order and scattered in knots, and gradually closing in more compactly as they approach the spot in the middle of the ring where the platforms are constructed at intervals of sixty or eighty yards, commanding passes and paths along which all the animals roused ought to be driven if the arrangements be perfect and the beaters intelligent and experienced; but so far as my own acquaintance with such grand circular drives extends, they prove in most cases surprisingly tiresome and barren of results.

I was carried one day twelve miles from my camp in the south of Manbhoom by a Zameendar styling himself a Rajah, who, wishing to show me sport, had organised a circular beat of great dimensions, in which three or four thousand men were to take part. I was placed in due course on a "machan" built in the midst of a "sal" forest on a ridge of some height, my obliging host and his numerous and very noisy and miscel-

laneous following taking possession of half-a-dozen others around me, and at once falling to eating, smoking and talking loudly for the space of about two hours, while many men armed with old guns and matchlocks, passed to and fro with orders or news; all hands coughing, spitting and hawking as loudly as if in the enjoyment of a feast of choice viands under their master's roof, the air filled with the reek and the gurgling sounds of many water-pipes, from the silver-mounted "goorgooree" of the Zameendar down to the simplest cocoanut "hookah" of his humblest retainers.

The spacious "machans" were solidly constructed of stout "sal" posts, fully ten or eleven feet above the ground; moreover, in order that due honour might be done on this occasion, they were thatched over with straw and leaves and walled round similarly, resembling somewhat the houses of the hill tribes on our eastern frontiers. But this was not all, for they were provided with a lower storey, or a ground floor, by the supports being enclosed within screens of branches and leaves of trees. Thus the chief taking possession, with two or more attendants, of the upper floor of a comfortable little bungalow, lodged in the basement as many more of his humbler retainers, all chattering and chewing "pan" to their perfect contentment.

On mounting my own "shooting-box" my first care was to remove the heavy roof and to substitute for it a lighter one of freshly cut branches to give a more natural look to the structure. The next step was to change the thickly woven walls, in which small peep-holes were left on all four sides, for green screens only breast high; and then, arranging my guns and rifles conveniently to my hands, and making mental notes of the runs of animals and of the vistas between the trees around me, I seated myself on a low cane "morah" or stool, and prepared to spend peacefully the next three or four hours with the help of a book, without which I never venture upon a big beat, and a case of cheroots. One attendant sat with me upon the "machan" to watch the rear, while two others, who had brought up my canteen, drinking-water, and

ammunition, reposed in perfect security below. Seeing preparations made on such a grand scale, and the great forest and numerous wooded dells and ravines round about us, surely, I thought, a tiger or two, or even a herd of "gour" will presently show themselves, to say nothing of bears, panthers, sambur and other "small deer." With this comforting reflection I betook myself to my book and cigar.

We had mounted our platforms about an hour before noon, and after reading for two or three more, I broke the monotony of the occasion by a slight repast and a second cigar, which, being finished, I sat for another hour listening to the twittering of small birds and the rustling of dry leaves as they were blown along the ground by gusts of hot wind, wondering whether the affair might not prove a huge hoax, the Zameendar and his retinue preposterous humbugs, and the thousands of beaters a figment, the offspring of an exuberant Oriental imagination. About three o'clock, when the sinking sun began to cast lengthening shadows, and narrow streaks of light between the tree-tops, certain dull sounds fell upon my ears, coming sometimes from the north, sometimes from the south, now from the east, and anon from the west; indistinct and intermittent at first, but gradually increasing in volume and vehemence, they proved loud enough to rouse my host and his followers from their slumbers, into which they had subsided after eating, drinking, smoking, and much chattering; but now, about four in the afternoon, they rose resplendent in their flowing garments of many hues, so admirably adapted to the requirements of wild sports, according to the general Oriental idea of the fitness of things, and with many eructations and much hawking and spitting, denoting contentment and repletion, they prepared themselves for the business of the day.

Up to this moment I had seen only a poor dowdy brown jungle-hen pecking its noiseless way past my position down a ravine in front, possibly in search of a drop or two of water, but the rising shouts of the beaters now caused me to prepare for the rush of savage beasts which must at length take

place. A powerful double rifle and a .500 double "Express" on my right; a .360 "Express" and a double 12-bore gun, loaded with No. 4 shot, on my left; and lastly, a hard-hitting double 12-bore rifle in hand, I felt prepared for anything between an elephant and a jungle-cock, and thus I waited in high hope and expectation.

About five o'clock the din became almost unbearable, as the drivers, afraid to advance among the crush of wild creatures which they supposed to be now about the "machans," or perchance of the smart fusilade which they expected to hear, stood drumming, screaming, and tootling on their fifes some scores of paces away from us; but not a gun or rifle spoke in answer to their meritorious howlings, neither the bellow of the charging bull "gour," the murderous roar of the infuriated tiger, nor the deep guttural coughs of the panther and bear rise above the uproar; but a solitary four-horned doe, ascending from the hollow in my front, passed timidly with a gentle pit-a-pat among the dry leaves to my rear, and I hope escaped unhurt through the ring of beaters around us.

Thus ended one of several great circular beats in which I have at different times taken a reluctant part. That so many square miles of woods, hills, and deep ravines should be untenanted by wild animals is more than I can believe; that the more dangerous kinds were allowed to slip back is very probable; and lastly, that deer were previously frightened away by the noisy preparations is not unlikely. I did not hear that the others on "machans" were more fortunate than myself, nor did the beaters with whom I conversed say that they had put up bears or any other big game. It seemed as if packs of wild dogs had hunted through these tracts, and driven every quadruped out of them for a season, but there was no evidence of even their presence.

The day's business over, my worthy host expressed his deep regret at the utter failure of such a grand drive, attributing it to some extraordinary combination of evil influences which to my duller Western intellect were not clear. However, I do believe that he did his best for my entertainment,

and was sincerely sorry at our want of luck, mainly due, I think, to the great scarcity of water, and perhaps, too, in some degree to the noisy and festive proceedings of my native companions, who must have highly perfumed a considerable tract of country around their "machans" that day, and left behind a scent which must have kept that neighbourhood free from wild animals till the next fall of rain.

Subsequently, while enjoying good sport in the south of the same district, we were inveigled ten miles away from our camp by the positive assurance of another pseudo-Rajah, of that ilk, of the splendid success which must infallibly attend a gigantic drive over the Dalma hill, to be arranged under his auspices, with the aid of ten thousand beaters, collected by him specially for that purpose. In spite of experience, and contrary to the dictates of our better judgment, we fell a prey to the Zameendar's blandishments, hoping to slay the mighty "gour," which is known to roam over that high hill. The tempter, a young and chubby individual, dressed in a purple silk coat, green and gold satin trousers, and a blue velvet cap, trimmed with tawdry gold tinsel to resemble a royal crown, gave us his solemn word of honour (or rather its vernacular equivalent) that his arrangements were so perfect and extensive, that, if we would but meet him at the foot of Dalma on the morning of the next day, we might rely on grand sport. Whether it was the innocent chubbiness of our inviter, the tinsel crown upon his well-oiled head, or a kindred feeling to that which induces a man to lead a forlorn hope, with the chances twenty to one against his ever coming alive out of it, we agreed (and of course duly repented) to meet him at the appointed time and spot.

Our ride to the rendezvous was a very enjoyable one, the weather being cool for March, the scenery along the base of the hills very pretty, and the woods ablaze with wild flowers of the most brilliant hues, the "palas" (both tree and creeper) not the least splendid and striking. We arrived on our ground a little before the Zameendar, from whom we received a cordial greeting, but our hearts failed us at the sight of

his suite; since, in addition to the usual tag-rag of many colours, it included a small indigenous *corps-de-ballet* and an opera troupe, to say nothing of many cooking utensils, both great and small. These festive indications were not in vain, for an immediate adjournment was made for refreshment and repose; to which end several cart-loads of queer looking articles in brass, in copper, in dirty bundles and prehistoric packing-cases, were handed about, and preparations made for a general lighting of fires. The assurance that there was no necessity to occupy our posts till noon, as the beaters had to come from great distances, and the uncertainty as to the exact positions to be taken up, tended together to depress our spirits, and to throw a little cold water on our sanguine anticipations.

In short, the whole thing proved an utter failure, and the promised perfection of the organisation altogether wanting. The vaunted ten thousand beaters dwindled down to as many hundreds, of whom not one half ever came up to our posts on the hill-top, and the positions taken up were badly chosen, so that not a single head of game passed by them. Lastly, our host himself turned out an arrant humbug; for after his mid-day meal, he found himself incapable of climbing the hill-side, and on discouraging reports coming in of his arrangements, he and his rabble-rout of attendants decamped early in the afternoon, so that on descending from our posts, heated, fatigued, and disgusted, we found them all vanished a couple of hours before, afraid to face us, or to account for their failure; and in this act alone they showed some discretion at least, if not valour or civility.

The moral to be drawn from the foregoing is to avoid grand circular drives, and to distrust the completeness of native sporting arrangements, and the fulfilment of native promises of sport.

As before remarked, the most satisfactory drives by far are those undertaken with one or two hundred picked and experienced beaters, Santhals for choice, through detached

hills or woods, each one beaten separately, while the sportsmen stand concealed as much as is possible, ready to receive a bear, a panther, a deer, a hare, or a jungle-cock, as the case may be. The drives, being of limited extent, can be properly controlled, whereas grand "hunkwas" cannot be so, and half the beaters employed shirk work, and, collecting in knots of eight or ten, discuss village politics, while they pick and eat berries, and throw in a howl now and then as their contribution towards the day's duties. Of such small beats I have many pleasant memories—happy days when both rifle and smooth-bore took part, and the camp kitchen fires sparkled and crackled briskly at their close under the choicest dishes, composed of many varieties of game, flesh and fowl. On one memorable occasion, when three or four of us formed a shooting party of this kind along the Grand Trunk Road above Nimia-ghât, in the pleasant month of January, my notes record some score or more of varieties of game in camp at one and the same time; viz., of venison (spotted and barking deer), hares, partridges (two kinds), pea and jungle-fowl, spur-fowl, sand-grouse, snipe, quail (several sorts), plover, wood-pigeons (two varieties), teal, and wild-duck of several kinds; all, too, in the best condition, as well as I could infer from the words and deeds of my companions, but from no personal experience, being one of those unhappy people who cannot swallow game of any kind, any more than a sporting dog can, however much he may set his mind on it.





CHAPTER XIV.

Rhinoceros and Rhinoceros-shooting—Three Distinct Varieties in Bengal—Their Disappearance from certain Localities in which they were formerly plentiful—Tracking Rhinoceros on the Back of an Elephant—Rhinoceros-shooting with a Line of Elephants—Good Sport—Numerous about the Sources of the Monass—Shooting Rhinoceros in the “Soonderbuns”—A Surprise on the March—Birds Attendant on Rhinoceros.

THERE are three distinct varieties of rhinoceros to be found within the limits of the Lower Provinces; viz., the great Indian (*R. Indicus*), the Soonderbun (*R. Sondaicus*), and the two-horned or Malayan. Of these, the first is the largest and best known, the second is almost as large, and the third is the smallest and most rare, being found only in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. I have heard of the *R. Indicus* as having been seen in the valley of the Langai River, in Sylhet, by elephant catchers, and it is probable that it was common in that district, as well as in Cachar, in which latter the jungles and swamps were particularly suited to its habits and tastes. There is a place called “Gaindamara” (rhinoceros-killed) in Cachar, which as late as ten or a dozen years ago was in every way adapted to this animal; but I never saw even the spoor of one there or at any other place in Cachar, and conclude that it disappeared from it altogether at least fifty years ago, and migrated northwards long before the axe and the hoe of the tea-planter converted its vast forests and morasses into gardens. It is probable also that both the Indian and the two-horned types formerly met in those wildernesses prior to the English occupation. We know that in old times Sylhet was a market for rhinoceros hides, from which were

made shields to cover the warriors who fought in the plains of Hindostan, Western and Central India; and thus many a hide which grew and toughened upon the bodies of these monsters in Sylhet, Cachar, and Lower Assam, were afterwards slashed and dented in the hand-to-hand encounters of Rajpoots, Puthans, Moghuls, and Mahrathas, and may have turned aside the arrows of Tartars and Bashkirs, and in days of yore have been crushed beneath the sledge-hammer blows of Cœur-de-Lion and his Paladins in Syria. The hides are still valuable, and the horns are more so, fetching from twenty to thirty rupees the pound in the bazaars, being used by Hindoos in some ceremonies connected with the worship of idols, and by Chinese for far more useful purposes. There are many superstitions attached to the horn of the rhinoceros, and one is the virtue it possesses, when formed into drinking vessels, of discovering poison in the contents.

A story is told of a gentleman in Assam, having ascertained the value put upon horns in this country, commissioning a brother at the Cape to send him a large consignment for sale. In due course of time a quantity of the horns of the black and white species was received, but, to the consignee's surprise, could not be disposed of, although in every way superior to the Indian article. It then transpired that, being far finer and larger than any previously seen by them, the intelligent Marwaree and Hindoo traders pronounced these horns spurious and "Brummagem," and not at all the genuine manufacture of nature! Here is a hint for the enterprising merchants of my native land, for which I hope they will duly thank me in suitable form when the proper time arrives.

The flesh also of this animal is highly esteemed by many tribes, such as the "Mech," the "Koch," the "Rhubbah," and others, who will follow the camp of the sportsman for days together, and will even assist to transport his baggage without hire if liberally provided with its flesh for food. Some Hindoos, too, have a high opinion of its manifold virtues, but, having tasted the meat, I have failed to discover a single one, even a savouriness within reason.

A discussion often arises whether the horn of the rhinoceros is its weapon of offence, one party maintaining that it is never, and the other that it is always so used. My own observations on this point lead me to the conclusion that both are right and wrong at the same time; that on most occasions the powerful incisor teeth are the offensive weapons employed, but that the horn is also sometimes so used, although the ordinary purpose it fulfils is to grub up roots and strip off the bark of trees; its ordinary worn appearance fully proves that it is extensively used. With its formidable incisors this creature will rip open the side of an elephant, using them precisely as the boar does his tusks; and both in attack and in flight it can display an astonishing degree of speed and activity, in spite of its ugly and clumsy form.

Inhabiting as these great beasts do only the densest and remotest jungles of grass, reeds, and wild cardamoms, they inflict little injury on man, and are almost harmless; but if they wander away into cultivation and are worried and disturbed, they become vicious and mischievous, but such instances are extremely rare. Some forty or fifty years ago they were to be found on the "churs" of the Koasee in Purneah, and at the base of the Rajmehal hills, especially near Sikrigully, but they have deserted those places altogether at the present time.

Its vast bulk and power apart, the rhinoceros is not an animal to be attractive as game; nevertheless it is so to some, who prefer its pursuit to that of the tiger. Followed soon after dawn with two or three elephants, and patiently tracked up into its fastnesses till found and slain, it no doubt affords sport; but if put up surrounded by a great line of elephants, and ultimately riddled with bullets and mobbed to death, it does not and cannot show much sport.

The following may be taken as an exceptionally good example of a day's rhinoceros shooting from the backs of elephants, when the season (end of March), the state of the coverts, and the number put up, were all favourable to sport.

We were a party of four "howdahs" with eighteen elephants in all, shooting along the southern bank of the Brahmapootra, in the district of Goalpara in Lower Assam, and had arrived near Luckipoor enjoying splendid sport, and making daily miscellaneous bags of buffalo, marsh-deer, hog-deer, pea-fowl, floriken, hares, and partridges, with a tiger or two occasionally; marching and shooting ten or twelve miles every other day along the left bank of the great river, our tents and baggage were conveyed in boats, close to which we always encamped. On reaching camp near Luckipoor we were greeted with good news of rhinoceros being near at hand, and accordingly the following day was devoted to their especial pursuit.

Leaving our tents soon after daybreak, the word was passed for no firing on any other thing than the object of that day's pursuit—tigers only excepted; and in half an hour we were beating with a broad and rather open line, through immense fields of lovely green young grass four or five feet high, in which many marsh and hog-deer were put up and permitted to escape unfired at. Presently we approached the opposite side of the grass, where a bare plain of a mile or two stretched away to the south towards the Garo hills, when three rhinoceros were seen making off ahead of the line, which was then pushed on rapidly. Although their heads and backs showed above the grass, the animals were too distant to be fired at with good effect, and one separating from its companions and breaking out on the right made off into the open, while the other two turning to the left skirted the jungle, seemingly loth to leave its shelter. My post was on the left of the line, with three or four pad elephants beyond me on that flank, and these being signalled to advance at a run, headed the two remaining animals, so that on my gaining the end of the extensive grass covert, I saw one of the two galloping away over the plain at a great pace; but the third, a huge male, stood on the outside, undecided in his mind what to do, and half inclined to fight it out. As my elephant stepped out of the higher into some shorter grass, I caught

sight of him standing eighty paces to my left; but on turning towards him he wheeled round and made off also, presenting his broad stern only. Ordinarily the distance was too great for an effective shot, but there being no chance of a better, I let drive a two-and-a-half ounce steel-tipped conical at him in the hope of breaking a leg bone; the shot told unmistakably. On being struck the beast ran along the covert side for a hundred yards, and then pulling up began swaying about from side to side, and before I got up to him rolled over on his left side stone dead. This, as a great piece of luck, delighted us all, as an auspicious commencement of the day's sport. As the huge animal lay on its side, his upper fore-leg standing out horizontally was as high as my face, and he proved to be a particularly fine bull of the largest size in the prime of life. Being opened the bullet was found embedded in his lungs, after having entered in a soft place near the root of the tail, traversed the body, and inflicted frightful internal injuries. Blood had spouted from his mouth in jets, and his lungs were found to be completely smashed.

After this we continued our course southwards for two or three miles, working through a splendid savannah of high grass, with here and there a marsh with clear water in the middle, on which reposed flocks of ducks and teal, while marsh-deer and buffalo, springing up out of the grass, made off unmolested. Towards noon, as we were beating carefully line in line, two more rhinos were roused, and one, a large cow, was struck several times, but got away. I was still in my appointed position, well on the left flank with two or three beating elephants beyond me, and in the chase of the wounded animal, when, within fifty paces in a mud-hole, I came upon a very tall emaciated-looking old bull, at which I obtained two good shots as he sprang up to bolt, which so severely damaged him, that after a run of a few hundred yards he pulled up into a walk, and allowing me to gain upon him, was slain without trouble with one more ball in the neck. This was an aged beast, as high as the first, but a mere bag of bones and hide, with a short stump of a horn worn down to four or five

inches in length, unlike the other's, which was a very good one, weighing two and a quarter pounds. After this we halted to rest and refresh for a couple of hours beside a wide "jheel," in which our elephants thoroughly cooled and enjoyed themselves in the succulent green young grasses and rushes.

At two in the afternoon the "howdahs" were re-mounted and line formed facing the north-west, with the intention of sweeping round through some heavy covert not yet explored, in the midst of which a narrow but deep "nullah" ran in a tortuous course, with many rhinoceros trails passing down and along its banks. From the great height and thickness of this jungle of reeds, seemingly never burnt, the beat proved most arduous, the "nullah" or its many branches turning up before us on all sides, rendering our task most tedious. However, we were kept on the alert by putting up a rhino, or stumbling upon a buffalo every now and again, and we could hear them plainly enough without seeing them at all, no matter how close they might be, if not under the muzzles of our rifles. At last, after an hour's hard work, one of the party viewed a rhinoceros going down the bank of the main "nullah," with the apparent intention of throwing us off by crossing it, but on receiving a bullet in its back it turned up again and made a blind sort of a charge, in the course of which two or three more balls told without dropping it. We now lost it for a minute or two, but recovering its broad track we followed at best pace, and overhauled it in company with two others making play ahead. The two unwounded animals got away round our right flank, probably back to the spot from which they had been roused, but the wounded one, now bleeding profusely, passed obliquely to the left of the line with great snortings, and making a terrific noise as it crushed the stout reeds, which grew there higher than our heads as we stood in our "howdahs," in its savage rushes to get at its unseen enemies. Passing before me at a distance of only a few yards, but quite invisible, Rhino received from my rifle two shots, the first causing it to turn fiercely upon my elephant, when the second struck it in the shoulder,

bringing it down upon its knees, but only for a second or two. Before I could exchange the discharged muzzle-loader rifle for a loaded one, Rhino was off again, making for the deep "nullah" on the left, towards which we all turned, and being on that flank, it was my luck to view it as it showed on the bank before plunging down with another ball in the neck, which laid it dead in the water below. The sides of the stream being almost perpendicular, we had no little trouble in getting down to cut off the head and shields. This proved to be a young but full-grown cow, with a slender horn of moderate length.

We had killed three and wounded at least as many more that day, and might altogether have roused from first to last ten or a dozen small and great, though some were never once sighted in that dense covert. Turning homewards we gained the tents about sunset, picking up on our way half-a-dozen marsh and hog-deer for our hungry camp followers.

Having seen so many rhinoceri that day, we devoted the next to the same pursuit, but killed only one, although at one time we had seemingly half-a-dozen ahead of us. The previous day's firing had driven many of them farther away towards the foot of the Garo hills without having had any effect upon other game, of which we met with great numbers, without finding a single tiger in these, its well-known haunts; nevertheless we enjoyed a good day's sport, and made a large bag both in weight and numbers, viz., a rhinoceros, five buffaloes (unsought), nine marsh and seven hog-deer, two peacocks, a floriken, five brace of "kyah" partridge, and a pink-headed duck. The scenery near the foot of the hills was wild in the extreme, and in the eyes of a sportsman lovely beyond compare; but the jungles were so extensive and dense that our line of eighteen elephants was lost in it, and had we not carried on some of them flags of white cloth on bamboo poles to regulate our movements in wheeling, and to dress the line, we should sometimes have inevitably lost each other, or got astray, particularly in beating round morasses. We saw no elephants on that occasion, but their tracks were numerous,

and a considerable herd had fed recently in one of the marshes, attracted thereto by a kind of weedy grass called "dul" by natives, which grew abundantly in it, and forms a favourite food.

The above is a favourable sample of this sport, and quite as good was to be had then at the sources of the Monass river, on the opposite side of the Brahmapootra, and along the base of the foot-hills of the Himalayas, a magnificent sporting country, and probably the very choicest in India; abounding in elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo, gour, and marsh-deer, with sambur, tigers, and bears in smaller numbers. I have heard from my friend Colonel P., that during a trip of ten days (in 1870 I think) through that part of Assam, he and his party saw at least fifty rhinoceri, but for causes explained by him, their bag was in no degree commensurate with the numbers viewed, the elephants proving unsteady and timid, and the shooting indifferent in consequence. There are not many tigers to be found in that splendid field, those animals preferring the comparatively cultivated tracts, and the vicinity of great herds of cattle.

Balls from modern rifles will penetrate even the shields of the *R. Indicus*, if driven home by six or seven drams of powder at moderate ranges, the best places for them to be placed being the neck, behind the great shield on the shoulder, and downwards at the junction of the head and neck. As before observed, this is not a particularly attractive sport, apart from its comparative rarity, and the wildness of the jungles inhabited by the quarry; but if it could be followed on foot, its pleasures and excitements would be vastly augmented; that however can hardly ever be done, from the nature of the jungles the animal affects, although by its custom of resorting to certain spots to deposit its dung (as do some antelopes and deer too), it offers an opening for attack by the rifleman, who may choose to sit for a shot in a "machan" or pit.

When tea-gardens were first opened out in Assam, these huge creatures were so plentiful and so fearless, that they

were sometimes fired at from the houses of the pioneer planters; and I have been shown a spot on which one of them stood behind a bungalow, preventing the occupants' dinner being served, till driven away by several shots, the kitchen in this country not forming a part of the dwelling-house as in Europe and countries of the temperate zone.

In the "Soonderbuns" it is possible under the most favourable circumstances to seek the rhinoceros on foot; but quite apart from the extreme unhealthiness of those forests, that sport is attended by so many difficulties and discomforts, that it is not much engaged in by other than the most enthusiastic sportsmen. I have had myself very little experience of it, but am not altogether unacquainted with it, having during my early career in this country often visited those wildernesses of evil repute, which swarm with game beyond all doubt in many places, particularly on the sea-face, and marshes within the woods, and lastly, on the skirts of the remotest cultivation.

Along the base of the hills in the "Doars" this animal may occasionally be met with by the "gour" or deer-stalker; for in those regions rarely trod by the foot of man, he roams without fear or dispute as a monarch, to whom even the mighty elephant must give way, and before whose ponderous strength and weight the morose bull-buffalo must bend the knee and kiss the dust.

Mr. Robertson Pughe writes to me:—"I was once marching with a detachment of Frontier Police at the foot of the Bhutan Hills in the middle of May. Nearly all my men being, or having been, down with fever, the march was a melancholy one in the extreme. In course of time we arrived at the margin of a small pond in the midst of a dense forest, and while the men rested, I took a turn round the water in search of tracks. Finding some of rhinoceros, I followed them. The mud left upon the bushes and trees by the sides of the animals was barely dry, but I failed to come up to them, and time at my command not allowing of a prolonged pursuit, I gave a 'coo-ee' to call up my men, bitterly to regret

it the next moment, when I heard a great splashing a few yards ahead, and running forward, found a family of six rhinoceri—male, female, and young—in a state of great commotion. One of them, a large bull, coming out on my side of the water in which they were all standing, compelled me to take shelter behind a tree, from whence I gave him a ball at about fifteen yards' distance, but he went away as if untouched. My second barrel was fired at another mounting the bank on the opposite side, but it, too, got away, leaving lots of blood and froth on the trail, and although I followed, it was to no purpose, and I never saw one of them again. But for that unlucky and ill-timed 'coo-ee,' I might have had the gratification of seeing that family at play, and had I had a heavy instead of a light rifle, I should have bagged one if not more."

According to Mr. Pughe, the "myna" takes the place in India of the rhinoceros-bird in Africa, attaching itself to him for the purpose of picking off the ticks and other parasites which infest his hide, but sometimes becoming unintentionally the messenger of death to its gigantic ally, as its upward soaring and alighting on the same spot will reveal the presence of its friend to the watchful sportsman, who otherwise might not discover him in the midst of a sea of grass.

As the "king-crow" attends the buffalo, sitting upon his neck or back, ever ready to snap up the insects disturbed by the grazing animal, and the graceful white cattle-heron stalks in front of the feeding cow with the same object, I fear a purely selfish one, so the "myna," no doubt, becomes the attendant of the rhinoceros, as much for the sake of the insects roused out of the grass and reeds as for those to be found on his skin.





CHAPTER XV.

Rhinoceros and Rhinoceros-shooting, *continued*—A Trip to the Sea-face of the "Soonderbuns"—Boats and Boating—Spotted Deer—Wild Hog hunting Crabs on the Beach—Abundance of Game—A ticklish Position—Unexpected Sport with Rhinoceros—A huge Python—Porpoises and Sharks—Intricate Navigation—A Tiger roused—Another Rhinoceros killed—A Tiger shot—Shooting Deer from a Boat—Death of a monster Crocodile—Big Game near Calcutta—A large Rhinoceros found and lost near Baraipoor—Rhinoceros very abundant in the "Soonderbuns"—Epidemics among Wild Beasts—Shooting off Elephants impracticable.

FINDING myself once, in the course of a tour, within reach of an ebb tide of the mouth of one of the many rivers which pour their waters through the Eastern "Soonderbuns" into the Bay of Bengal, I was induced to continue my way downwards; first by a desire to visit a portion of the sea-face with which I had no previous acquaintance, and next to test the glowing reports of the abundance of spotted deer to be there seen.

The time was January, a day or two before the full moon; the weather tolerably cool, and the breeze light and northerly; all favourable for a run down to the sea, not approachable at all seasons in country boats.

For the whole of that day, from early morn, I had sailed swiftly and smoothly down a broad stream, both banks of which were covered with forests of "soonderee" and other trees, much thinned by wood-cutters, till a little before sunset I anchored, and made all snug for the night in a reach, below which the river widened considerably.

Weighing anchor early the following morning, we started under sail for our port of destination, leaving behind the

eight-oared country boat, which served as kitchen and tender to be picked up on our return. My own boat was a particularly fine and comfortable craft. Originally built to navigate the stormy and shallow tideways of the Megna, she pulled twelve oars, carried two masts and lug-sails, and was fast whether rowed or sailed. She was sixty feet in length by twelve beam; bows and stern alike, except that the former stood a little higher out of water. Her cabin accommodation consisted of a pantry, three feet by twelve, a saloon twelve by twelve, a bedroom eight by nine or ten, and a bathroom three and a-half by seven or eight. Aft the cabins, which were over six feet in height within, was a deck of six feet, on which the food of the Mahomedan crew was cooked in a caboose. Before the cabins the deck was all clear for the rowers, with a low hatch leading below deck, where sails, chains, ropes, and the crew's kits were stowed away, together with my own stores. The boat having a keel of only three inches on her round bottom, lay over very little on taking ground, and ran no danger of being upset in a strong tide-way, as a sharp built one would be. With such a craft, drawing two and a-half feet, and with a crew of thirteen sturdy Noakholly boatmen, the mouths of any rivers might be navigated in safety during the cold season, or indeed at any other time. Being built with great care of well-seasoned timber, and copper-bottomed, she was capable of making fair weather in a considerable swell.

About four in the afternoon, the north breeze having died away, and a southerly air blowing from the sea, we anchored a couple of miles from the mouth of the river in a little bay of the left or eastern bank, where the swell which set in with the spring tide shortly after was little felt, and the heaving of the water, usually perceptible so near the sea, even in a perfect calm, only caused the boat to rise and fall with a gentle motion. A glorious moon rose soon after sunset, and lit up the deep woods and the rushing river with a soft shimmering light, very pleasant to look upon; while shoals of the "bummelow" and other small

fish floated past on the strong flood tide. Having placed ready at hand a heavy rifle, and set an anchor-watch, to guard against boarding by some enterprising tiger, I turned in early after dinner, and soon fell asleep, lulled by the lapping of the rushing tide.

The night passed in perfect quiet, broken only by the dull sound of the breakers upon the sands, the cries of curlews, the clang of wild geese changing their feeding grounds, and the wheezy breathing of porpoises which rolled along with the tide in pursuit of small fish. Day broke chill and misty, with a light air from the sea, so that, although I was up and had taken my early breakfast before sunrise, it was six bells (let us be nautical now) before we stepped into the jolly-boat to row down to some place below, where it might be desirable to land, to pursue on foot the sport fortune had in store for us that day.

Not knowing exactly what animals might be met with in such a wilderness, rarely visited by human beings, I took the field with a 10-bore rifle, another 12-bore, and a 12-bore gun (all by Westley-Richards), seven stout fellows, and an ample supply of ammunition and refreshments. After coasting along for half a mile, and passing the mouth of a creek up which the tide was swiftly flowing, I landed upon a sandy spit, and leaving two men in the jolly-boat to await our return, I walked slowly and noiselessly on the soft sand, till turning a point of the forest which came down close to the water's brink, I sighted a herd of about a dozen spotted deer a couple of hundred yards ahead, which dashed into the woods before I could bring a barrel to bear upon a stag. The distance being too great for accurate shooting, I refrained from firing, and moved on till the sea-shore was reached, and followed it then eastwards.

The beach consisted first of a line of hard fine sand, and above it of a belt of mixed mud and sand, some thirty or forty yards in breadth; then a streak of mud overgrown with rushes, low bushes, and sharp stumps and roots of trees, and above that again the dark and silent woods.

For some moments after turning eastward along the sand, I confess my mind was more occupied by the scenery, then new to me, than aught else, but the round stern of a boar trotting on in front recalled me to the business of the day. The pig sauntered on leisurely, stopping here and there, snout to the sand, as if bent upon some interesting investigation; anon turning up the sand and munching something apparently very toothsome and dainty. Curious to learn what he was at, I followed silently, and discovered that he was diligently engaged in hunting and eating crabs, which ran about in hundreds above the wash of the waves, and on being disturbed made each for his own particular hole in the sand, or if cut off therefrom ran into the water. They were the kind common on this coast, bright red in colour, and about the size of a shilling to a half-crown piece. The boar sniffing at a hole, and finding its occupant at home, turned up the sand with his snout, and if successful in catching the householder, the latter was at once snapped up and eaten. Having no quarrel with him, I gave the boar a loud good morning, which startled him very considerably, and caused him to make off in a great hurry into the forest, with loud grunts expressive of the utmost alarm and surprise at an object probably quite new to him.

As I walked along the beach I noticed that it was covered with the footprints of deer and wild hog, which had passed over it since midnight, when the tide was at the full, and made it their playground in the bright moonlight, having in some places run round and round, in the enjoyment of the balmy sea-air, in complete safety, since there they could not be surprised by their fell tyrant the tiger, or the still more horrible python.

When I had covered a mile of beach I came upon an opening in the woods on my left, looking as if the trees there had been laid low by some terrific tornado, and had given place to a growth of bushes and dwarf palm over some forty or fifty acres. Entering the glade cautiously, I put up in it a large herd of spotted deer, which, scattering right and left,

made off at speed with flashing skuts, but a stag, moved by curiosity, lingered behind to stare at me, nose in air and antlers laid over his back. Being suitably dressed and the wind blowing across us the handsome beast could make nothing of me, as I stood stock still, and partially concealed by the brushwood, and thus he gave me a fair shot at eighty paces at his white thick throat which showed above the covert. The report of the 12-bore rifle—perhaps the first ever echoed by those woods—was succeeded by a slight rustle of leaves, and then all was still. My gun-bearer, who had crawled up behind, whispered his opinion that I had missed and the stag was off, but the dull thud of the bullet had caught my ear, so that on walking up to where he had stood, a noble stag was found stone dead, shot through the throat and the vertebræ of the neck. Leaving him where he fell, well covered with branches of trees, we walked round the opening putting up many deer, seeing one now and then for an instant, and wounding, without bagging, a second stag; and thus we once more returned to the open beach, having observed the foot-prints of tigers thickly dented in the muddy paths which intersected the thickets in all directions, but without remarks thereon we pursued our silent way with increased caution.

On regaining the sands we turned again to the left and walked along them, now nearly covered by the rising tide, for a full mile without meeting with anything worthy of note, except the dried and blackened skin and bones of a hammer-headed shark, eleven feet in length by my measuring tape—a strange and uncouth monster, which must have been cast up by the sea some days before, after having been wounded unto death by some other mightier than he.

Another mile got over we came upon a second opening in the woods similar to the last, but far larger, and extending to nearly a mile inland. On entering the scrub a sounder of hog rose suddenly almost at our feet, and scuttled off before us in terrible alarm; and following upon their tracks we presently came out of the low jungle and found ourselves on the margin of a park-like expanse, surrounded by deep woods—

dark, and frowning, as if in envy, upon the bright savannah lit up by the warm sun, and rejoicing in the brisk cool breeze. This open space was dotted over by a few trees and bushes, and was somewhat higher than the surrounding forest, slightly undulating, and its sandy soil clothed with a short crisp grass. The general appearance was such as to induce the surmise that during some great cyclone the sea had risen and encroached into the forest, and after destroying it, had retreated again, leaving the surface of the clearance formed into hummocks and dips, resembling, in miniature, hills and valleys.

Cautiously mounting a sandy ridge I took a glance round without at first detecting any game, but presently made out a herd of several scores of deer under a clump of trees a quarter of a mile off to my left, a head or a pair of antlers now and then showing above the soft grass, in which the animals nestled to enjoy their noonday siesta. Followed by a single gun-carrier I commenced a stalk under cover of the ridge, the sea breeze blowing across my line of advance; and I had approached the herd within two hundred yards, when a stag and two hinds, rising up suddenly out of some bushes close to me, startled the others, and sent them flying into the jungle on the skirts of which they had been reposing. Not to be balked altogether, I took the stag in the stern with the smaller rifle and knocked him over, head over heels, but rising up he limped away after his companions with another bullet in his ribs to join the herd to which he no doubt belonged.

The blood-spattered trail led us into a covert of a kind of dwarf palm, called by the natives "hurtal," which grows ordinarily to the height of five or six feet on the banks of tidal creeks, and on lands saturated with brackish water; but where we entered, it rose three or four above our heads, so that we walked in the shade of the thick and drooping fronds without difficulty, till having penetrated some way, we got entangled in a net of small muddy "nullahs," up which the flood-tide was gently flowing. After a manful struggle

to stick to the trail we were fain to relinquish further pursuit, and return to the clearance by a sweep made round to our right, and this we did for fully a mile, when we were startled by shouts from behind.

In taking up the last trail, I was closely attended by two men carrying the gun and the second rifle, the other three following some distance in the rear and out of sight, but guided by our footprints upon the yielding soil. Halting on hearing the cries, the second party was allowed to rejoin us, and then it appeared that one of them was missing, a long-bearded up-country tent-pitcher, much addicted to chattering, and somewhat to boasting to boot. Our progress in the "hurlal" jungle had been crossed and re-crossed by numerous tracks of tigers, which appeared to have made it a favourite promenade. At first then our fear was that the man lagging behind had been "set" by a tiger and seized, but repetitions of his outcries raised hopes of his safety as we hastened back to his relief, and shortly our fears were removed on finding him unhurt and shouting lustily for help. It now transpired that the man's nerves had received a shock in the jungle we had attempted to penetrate in the early part of the morning when the stag was shot, and afterwards, on observing tigers' tracks even more abundant in this than in the last covert, his fears had so completely mastered his reason, that hanging back for some purpose he had lost sight of his two companions, and instead of hastening to overtake them, he had sat down in utter terror and despair, and by his shouts had invited the tigers to come and eat him. This man's fears acting upon the nerves of the others, who up to this time had manfully followed me without a word, it became advisable to get out of a situation in which I felt I should not be on fair terms with a tiger bent on a sudden attack, nor even with a comrade on whose nerve and rifle full reliance could be placed would I care to invite such an encounter in so ticklish a place, where one could not see five paces ahead or sides. We were not sorry then to see sunshine again, on stepping out into the open ground at its

northern or farthest end, where we rested awhile and reconnoitred.

Our movements having been extremely noiseless (through a polite desire not to disturb the siesta of any tigers which might be reposing in that neighbourhood), we had gained unseen and unheard a spot which commanded a view across the open, but the day being far advanced, all animals had taken to the shelter of the woods, and not one showed itself; nevertheless we silently skirted the bushes and "hurtal" on the northern side of the clearance, intending to return to the beach by the eastern. I now remarked, for the first time, certain tracks which I recognised as those of rhinoceros, and not a few either, and some quite fresh, as of that morning. Quickly and silently exchanging the 12 for the 10-bore rifle loaded with steel-tipped conicals, I moved cautiously ahead attended by one man only, carrying the other rifle and the gun, one on each shoulder, the rest of the party following some distance behind, and in this manner the north-east angle of the clearance was nearly reached, when a sight which caught my eyes, caused me to drop down on my hands and knees behind a bush, my gun-carrier at the same time flat on his face, whispering softly "elephants!" He had never before seen a rhinoceros or the picture of one.

On the margin of a mud-hole twenty or thirty feet in diameter stood a huge rhinoceros in deep contemplation of two shapeless slate-coloured lumps just showing above the muddy water; in other words, two companions enjoying a mud-bath, while he, having had his, as his well-plastered hide testified, was basking in the sun half asleep, working his ears and stamping with a foot now and then as flies pestered him. The mud-hole was near the jungle on the north, and fully two hundred yards from our ambuscade; too far for a shot at so tough a customer, and there was no cover between us beyond a few rushes and a little scrub, too thin and low to afford concealment. Backing out, therefore, a little distance, I entered the bushes, which formed a fringe of the forest all round, and charily making a little sweep, not alto-

gether unmindful of the possibility of a tiger being an interested spectator of my evolutions, I wriggled my way to a position within sixty paces of the pool, the wind favourable and the enemy's broadside bearing almost directly on me. Looking about me while recovering my breath after the stalk, I observed that the water in the hollow was rising by the influx of the tide along a rill issuing from the woods, so that the patriarch's fore-feet were now immersed, but the sedges and rushes in which he stood barely reaching his belly, his whole right side was fully exposed to view. As soon as my breathing had settled down to its normal state, the big rifle was directed to the neck, but on drawing a sight, it was somewhat covered by the huge bulging shoulder, the head being turned a little away from me, making the shot an uncertain one at the angle presented; the aim, therefore, was rapidly changed to a point a trifle behind the shoulder, and the heavy bullet told truly with a loud smack. On feeling the wound the great creature threw up his head with a grunt, and glared round for the enemy who had struck him, and before his position was changed a second bullet hit him on the same spot, but a little more forward, and brought him on his knees with a wheezy sort of a groan. He was up again immediately, and dashed into the woods with blood spurting from his mouth. At the report of the first barrel the other two rose from the mire in a mighty hurry, but paused on failing to discover aught on which to vent their wrath, and then seeing or scenting the smoke, galloped off after their leader, the larger of the two receiving from the second rifle one ball in the fore-ribs, and a second in the head, fired at short range, and driven home with four and a-half drams of powder. Without changing the smaller rifle in hand, I reloaded it with cartridges in my pocket, and followed as fast as I could on the broad trail left by the flying monsters, and before I had gone fifty yards, a loud crash and a long-drawn groan announced the fall of one at least, and soon after I almost stumbled over its huge carcase lying in the death-agony. Dashing on upon the bloody trail for

another hundred yards, I came upon the bank of a narrow creek, just as one of the animals was disappearing in the overhanging wood on the opposite bank, and the other was rising out of the water, exposing its broad back as it struggled with mighty efforts to extricate itself out of the sticky mud. A shot, planted in the middle of the back over the loins, followed by another just behind the head, caused the stricken beast to plunge forward stone dead; its fore-parts on land, and the hind-quarters and legs in the tide now near the full.

There being no means at hand to get at the fallen beast, I retraced my steps, to find my followers gathered round the carcase of the first, which proved to be a male of the largest size, carrying a well-worn horn of moderate size. The natives with me, who had never before seen a rhinoceros, gazed at it with silent awe as they walked round, examining its strange form and monstrous bulk, and when they heard that another had fallen they ran off in a body in the utmost excitement to view it and compare notes as to age, sex, and size.

Well pleased with my unexpected success, I had to consider how to secure the trophies, but soon gave up all idea of so doing that day in the absence of axes or bill-hooks, or the means of carriage. We then tied a white cloth on the branches of a tall tree growing on the spot to direct our search next day, and fastened a similar signal on the bank of the creek where the second beast lay, and after a short halt, we proceeded on our way along the eastern side of the clearing, and had nearly regained the beach without further adventure, when I noticed what at first sight looked like a fallen branch lying upon the ground. Something peculiar about the object induced me to approach it cautiously within half-a-dozen paces, and then I made it out to be, as I supposed, a dead python of extraordinary size. As we stood regarding it, it lay motionless, two-thirds of its length glistening in the bright sunshine, and the rest hidden in grass and scrub. To make sure I fired both barrels of the gun, loaded with No. 2 shot, into the head and neck, shattering them completely, and

yet no movement followed, but streams of clear red blood flowing abundantly proved it had been alive. Further examination showed that the reptile having swallowed some prey, which distended its body to a great size about the middle, we cut it open with our hunting-knives and "daos," and disinterred a wild sow, which it had seized and swallowed probably about sunrise, and was digesting, in a torpid condition, when we stumbled upon it basking in the sun. The python measured twenty-two and a half feet — a great length, but exceeded by many to be found in that wilderness.

After regaining the beach and looking along it eastward, we espied a dark object lying at high-water mark a quarter of a mile from us, which, on inspection, turned out to be the stern and a portion of the upper deck of a vessel of about eight hundred tons burden, which might have been lying there several years, for the timbers were decaying, and all colour and gilding had long been washed out by the salt air and water combined from the stern and upper cabins, which had been once highly decorated. What that hapless ship was, where wrecked, and when cast away upon that wild shore, there was nothing left to tell. After searching about and discovering in the jungle above high water mark, hurled up by some giant roller, a lower mast, and the ribs and bottom of a boat which may have belonged to the wrecked ship, we sat down, sheltered from the warm noonday sun, in the shadow of the poor castaway's side, and ate our tiffin, pondering on its unhappy fate. Thus an hour passed before we retraced our steps upon the sands left wet and soft by the retiring tide, till reaching the spot where the stag had been left concealed, we broke it up and carried away the meat to gladden the hearts of the crew.

Regaining the jolly-boat about four in the afternoon, the two men left in charge of her informed us that soon after our departure a large herd of deer had come out upon the sloping bank of the river, and after feeding and playing for some time, had retired when the sun became warm. Also that an

immense crocodile had basked for several hours on a sandy spit at the mouth of the creek.

In passing the opening of the creek, now quite shallow, we saw a number of porpoises rolling in the tide in the apparent enjoyment of a hearty meal upon shoals of small fish brought down by the ebb; and among them, too, appeared the sharp wicked-looking back fins of some sharks cutting through the water here and there, close-hauled and with tacks on board, engaged in a similar diversion. Had we been provided with a couple of light harpoons, with lines attached, we might have enjoyed a sport both novel and exciting, since some of the porpoises were huge, and the sharks from four to seven feet in length.

A little islet lay at the mouth of the river, about a mile from us, and half that distance from the opposite bank. Well wooded down to the water's edge, and its southern extremity stretching out wedge-like towards the sea in a narrow spit, the total length may have been three miles, and the greatest breadth less than one mile. On stepping on board the boat, the "Serang" (native boatswain) reported that great numbers of deer had shown themselves upon its shores where they were comparatively clear of forest till ten o'clock, and that some crocodiles of extraordinary size had basked in the sun till high-water on little sandy points; but no other creatures had been seen from the boat.

The boatmen having in our absence taken some good fish in nets, including a basketful of "bummelow," we all fared well that evening, and the night again passing in perfect quiet, we rose at dawn ready for a heavy day's work.

As the jolly-boat, which pulled four oars, could not accommodate all the men needed to cut up the rhinoceri shot the day before, it was my intention to leave the "Serang" in charge of the boat with four of her crew, besides the cook, "Khidmutgar," and bearer, while my gun-carrier, who could shoot a little, took command of a party composed of the tent-pitcher and four boatmen, and armed

with my double gun, and supplied with a sufficiency of ball-cartridges, should proceed along the seashore to the spot where lay the first rhinoceros; meanwhile, I and four other men should work the jolly-boat up the creek to the same place, or rather to that where we left the second beast, partly on land and partly in water. I further desired that whichever party first reached its destination should fire two shots as a signal to the other; adding, that as tigers might be attracted by the carcass, caution should be used in approaching it. On this the tent-pitcher, recalling recent experiences, moved an amendment to the effect that the land party should, on reaching the second clearance, await the signal from us before venturing into it; and this being warmly seconded, and appearing reasonable under all the circumstances of the case, was finally adopted.

We started about seven o'clock just as the flood set in, well provided for the work to be done in the cutting up and hacking way, even down to the cook's kitchen chopper, besides poles and ropes in abundance; and first putting on shore the land party at the mouth of the creek, we in the jolly-boat moved silently up it with the tide, in the expectation of obtaining a shot at deer, if no nobler game presented itself. My double smooth-bore being lent to the other party, I took instead a double .500 Express by Henry, which I kept in hand, the heavier rifles lying beside me ready for use. Since the rowlocks in rowing made much noise, the boat was poled up by two men, going fast on the strong flood, and I sat well forward, rifle across my knees. After we had gone half-a-mile, on turning an elbow of the creek, a stag and four hinds came in view within easy range, standing in the midst of bushes, which hid them up to the middle of their bodies, and staring at the strange sight which roused their curiosity more than alarm. The first barrel of the "Express" sent a bullet with a soft thud into the shoulder of the stag, and brought him down at once, and the second sent another rattling into the woods after the hinds, which disappeared like phantoms in their gloomy depths. Landing at once, we

broke up the deer, and hung it up on the fork of a tree close to the water's brink, with a wisp of cotton cloth as a mark.

After this no more shots were obtained till we had proceeded so far, that it became desirable to abstain from firing at deer, with the chance before us of a shot at larger game. Gliding on noiselessly, we had proceeded altogether four or five miles, when the creek narrowing considerably, and throwing off many branches, it became a matter of difficulty to select the right one. The distance along the seashore to the second clearance, where the rhinoceri were found, may have been three miles, almost due east; allowing, therefore, for the turnings, and consulting my pocket-compass, it seemed that the time had come for hitting off a branch to the right; accordingly, sweeping out of the main stream, we went up a branch heading southward, soon to discover our mistake, for it narrowed rapidly, and led us into a wilderness of gigantic "hurtal," and a labyrinth of small and shallow rivulets, very clearly out of our course. Our situation then became dangerous, as the jungle almost met over our heads, and a hungry tiger could have whipped off one of us out of the boat before a shot could have been fired; but worse still, we were on the wrong track.

We now returned to the main stream, and going up it till we came to another fork, one branch turning sharply to the north, we followed the other in a south-easterly direction, and in a quarter of an hour came upon the carcase of the rhino last killed, and then perceived that the other branch we had ascended, had led us to the "hurtal" covert, out of which we had turned away towards the open the previous day.

The hind quarters of the dead beast had been much torn by crocodiles, but the forepart, fixed in the deep mud, had resisted their efforts to drag it into deep water. Leaving the carcase, we landed on the opposite bank, and took up the track leading to the other, advancing cautiously, and a surly growl proved that caution was not uncalled for on that

occasion. Standing stock still for some moments, my finger on the trigger of my rifle, and every sense stretched to its utmost, I awaited some further demonstration, but a repetition of the same ominous sound at a greater distance, proclaimed the retreat of the enemy, a couple of bullets sent rattling after it, hastening the movements of the tiger, which could be heard bounding through the undergrowth, and at the same time giving the signal as concerted, answered at once by the seashore party, which joined us in half an hour, and commenced upon the labours of amputation.

My gun-carrier and I standing as sentries on the watch, the rest fell to work, and by dint of hard blows, and unremitting labours, removed in the space of a couple of hours the head and a portion of the hide, which were conveyed to the jolly-boat, together with certain parts of the body, carefully reserved by my followers, as sovereign remedies for divers human ailments, and restoratives of decayed vigour in the Asiatic constitution.

The ground round this carcase was thickly marked with the footprints of tigers, several having visited it since noon of the day before; but beyond attacking the softer parts they had not yet made much impression.

Next, we examined the sides of the pool in which the three rhinos had been found, and it appeared then to have been much resorted to, the tracks round it being numerous, both the old and the fresh, as well as the cones of dung, two and three feet high, left all round it.

Not sorry to get out of such a tigerish situation, and returning to the river-side, we crossed over and resumed the work of hacking and hewing upon the other, which proved to be a full-grown cow, whose head only was removed into the jolly-boat, other parts being hard to get at by reason of the mud and the rising tide.

After a hearty lunch, I on ham and biscuits, washed down with whisky and water, and my followers on cold venison and water undiluted, of which last each man carried a bottle (both this and the previous day), we separated again, the land

party to return by the seashore, and the rest in the jolly-boat, now heavily laden.

I am informed that drinkable water may be obtained by digging two or three feet into the sand of the seashore, just above high-water mark, but I cannot make that statement from experience, having always taken care to be well provided in that respect.

The tide being at its full our progress downwards became slow, two men poling at the stern, while I resumed my seat at the bows. When we had dropped down about a mile and a-half in perfect silence, the peculiar sounds made by a heavy animal in drawing up its feet from soft mud caused us to prick our ears, and a moment or two afterwards, on turning an elbow of the creek, a rhinoceros was viewed, slowly walking along the miry left bank, and showing above the low growth of jungle on it a couple of long ears and an immensely broad back.

The beast, unconscious of our vicinity, moved leisurely along, feeding at its ease, not thirty yards from us, when I opened fire with the heavy rifle and sent a conical raking forward towards the heart and lungs, following up with a second in the thigh, which broke its right hind leg as it darted forward to escape, but fell in the effort. Before the wounded animal could recover itself, the boat being propelled briskly up, I was able to strike it again twice with the 12-bore rifle at ten yards, bringing it down on its head as it rose, and I finished it with a fifth ball from the "Express." We dashed ashore with a hearty cheer, such as those wild woods had never echoed before, and casting ourselves in the mud knee-deep were soon standing beside the prostrate monster, a large male, with a better horn than the other two had. On examination we found that the first bullet alone would have killed in a few minutes, since it had penetrated the lungs; the third and fourth also inflicted mortal wounds near the heart, and the fifth had struck the middle of the neck; it was not surprising, therefore, that so great a beast should have succumbed so quickly.

With fewer hands for the work, we were a long time engaged in separating the head from the trunk and stowing it away in the boat, now deeper in the water than ever, and our progress would have been slow had not the set of the ebb helped us materially. Our only thought now was to get back to the big boat before sunset, and after so much firing there appeared no likelihood of further sport that day; but subsequent events proved that our good luck was not yet exhausted.

Within a mile of its mouth the creek widened considerably, and the falling tide left on each bank some feet of sloping mud-bank, on which a few rushes grew thinly. I was on the look-out for a shot at a deer, as my men were asking me to shoot them more venison, since they rarely tasted such good meat, and to meet their wishes the "Express" was in my hands ready for instant use. At this juncture a tiger was seen leisurely rising out of the water a hundred yards on the right, and after shaking off the wet from its coat like a monstrous Newfoundland dog, it stood for a few moments among the sedges before it caught sight of the boat, and glared angrily at the strange apparition. The range had become short—about sixty or seventy yards—and the target was large and stationary, so that the first bullet sped true to the mark, and as the report of the rifle thundered through the woods the tiger, rearing up on its hind legs, fell over on its back, beating the air with its fore-paws, gnashing its gruesome teeth, and emitting deep gurgling growls in the agony of death. A second and a third bullet fired in rapid succession made an end of the jungle king, a rather poor specimen of royalty as to robes and portliness, for, though of a fair length—nine feet nine inches—he was in low condition, and had a pale yellow skin, on which the stripes, as well as the ground-colour, were of dull tints, as if his Majesty had not enjoyed the best of health for some time, and required a change of air and a beef diet. Having swam over the creek, and being intent upon his toilet, this tiger had allowed us to steal up to him within easy range, when some

slight sound had attracted his attention to the boat, and moving his curiosity had sealed his fate. The first "Express" bullet had pierced and completely shattered his heart, the second had smashed his lungs, and the third had passed through his ribs.

Taking out the entrails, and casting them into the creek, as an offering to the crocodiles, sharks, and turtle, a rope fastened round his body, behind the arms, was thrown over the branch of the nearest tree, and the fore-part was hoisted by our united efforts two or three feet above the ground; next, with the other end of the rope tied round the loins and far lighter half of the body, the hind parts were lifted above the fore, and all made fast and left suspended, as the boat would hold no more; nor could we pick up the stag shot in the early morning, which remained safe and untouched as we had left it, vultures and carrion-crows being rare in the distant "Soonderbuns."

Landing the shore party on the north bank of the creek at its mouth, I was soon on board my boat, glad to get a bath and a change of clothing, for the day had been sultry, our work hard in a close atmosphere, and my shooting suit was saturated with blood and perspiration. During the night the wind changed to the north-west, a short, chopping sea got up with the flood, and made the boat pitch and roll till high-water about midnight, after which there followed a perfect calm, and all hands enjoyed the peaceful rest our labours had well earned.

The next morning there was much to be done, as the tiger and deer had to be brought in, and I was desirous of visiting the islet and to explore its shores. To do both, I took five men in the jolly-boat, and hoisting its split-lug, we crossed over, close-hauled with a smart north-westerly breeze, ordering the big boat to go up the creek when the flood made to bring the game, and to await my return to its former anchorage.

The strong ebb carried us down to a point of the island where the forest ended, and the long spit of sand pushed out

seawards, but the flood setting in about eight bells (nautical again), we slowly coasted along shore with oars, keeping a look-out for deer.

The forest consisted chiefly of "Soonderee" trees, from which these wild seaboard regions take their name, but a species of trees growing near the water's edge to the height of twenty or thirty feet, with small bright green leaves, covered certain points and miniature capes, which I have observed to be a favourite with spotted deer here and elsewhere. Among groves of these trees a good many deer were nibbling the delicate green leaves, and in the course of the morning gave me several shots, but I succeeded in securing only one stag, the finest yet shot, the others including one or two wounded ones, getting away where they could not be followed.

As a rule, I do not think the thick woods are much resorted to by aught besides monkeys and jungle-fowl, for they grow so thickly and form such a tangled and impenetrable covert, that even wild beasts find some difficulty in traversing them, except by paths opened in their passage from side to side. The sportsman who attempts pursuit in such coverts, unavoidably makes so much noise through the rustling of leaves and branches, that his approach is announced, and the animal he is after makes off, going ten yards to his one, and that one gained in a stooping posture, hampered by trees above and sharp stumps below; and lastly, he may come upon a crouching tiger, when his head is jammed between branches and his arms almost pinioned by the undergrowth. On the whole, it is a most unsatisfactory kind of sport at all times, and except for three months in the year a very unhealthy one to boot.

As we were about to re-cross to the eastern bank of the river, an immense crocodile came in view lying open-mouthed upon a tiny sandy spit, up which the tide was slowly creeping. The reptile lay fast asleep, head towards the water, and its curved tail on the gently sloping shore. It seemed to be airing its hideous mouth and throat in the genial sunshine and the crisp cool breeze; to make the picture complete, there ought

to have been the attendance of those little birds, which are said to have in their care the tongue and teeth of the crocodile, but they were absent on this and every other similar occasion of which I have had experience. Preserving the utmost silence, the tide gently swept us up to within fifty yards of the sleeping beauty, whose slumbers were disturbed by a ball behind the fore-paw, and for a moment I thought he was killed outright as he rolled over on his side, but after a struggle he came upon an even keel (nautical term), and waddled into the water with a second ball in his head close to the right eye, the mark showing bright red at once before he dived into the stream with a furious sweep of his tail; but rising again in the shoal water to breathe as they often do after receiving a severe wound, or doing so unconsciously as frequently happens, it was struck again by a third ball in the back just behind the neck. After this it sank and I feared I had lost it. In ten minutes however, it rose again and made for the shore, which I allowed it to ascend, where its death throes were terrific, as with distended jaws it rolled over and over several times, snapping its teeth and striking with its monstrous tail, exhibiting the most awful rage and agony. For a few instants I neglected to fire on witnessing struggles such as I had never before seen, ended at length by one more bullet between the eyes at short range, and I took possession of one of the very largest crocodiles I had ever seen. He was twenty-two feet in length and was of astonishing bulk of body. The head was short compared with his length, and of immense breadth between the eyes and back of the skull.

This monster could have carried off a tiger as easily as a cat does a rat, and could have bitten in two the body of a man as easily as a boy does an apple. I should have liked much to have secured his bones for the Calcutta Museum, but was unable to do so, and had to be satisfied with the head only, with which and the stag I rejoined the boat, and at once taking advantage of the remaining quarter of the flood, made as much way as was possible before evening set in.

The time at my disposal did not admit of a longer stay, or I am sure more good sport might have been enjoyed, especially further up the creek than I had penetrated, for it appeared that we had hit off by mere accident a favourite haunt of the *R. Sondaicus* and of the tiger. Deer are plentiful in many parts of the "Soonderbuns," probably nowhere more so than in places in Sagor island, where I have seen them as thick as rabbits on a warren; but on the other hand, the ground to be got over is so unpleasant that a tithe of the numbers in a good stalking country would afford infinitely better sport, since sport does not consist in the mere killing of game, but in the enjoyment of open air and wild scenery, joined to the exercise of skill and endurance of toil followed by merited success in moderation.

When some estimable lady or gentleman dies full of years, we are told, as if it were something to make our eyes start out of our heads with amazement, that she or he (I think it is generally the former), remembered hearing of tigers having been killed within a few miles (distance rarely exactly defined) of Government House. No doubt they have been so shot, but without pretence to being estimable or venerable, or desirous of alarming the distinguished company which takes the air daily on the Strand, or in the Eden Gardens, I can say that I have not only heard of, but have seen a tiger—a wild one—not many miles from Belvedere; and furthermore, have put up and wounded a rhinoceros no further off, and that I believe will surprise some people even more.

The latter encounter came about in this way. In the course of a hunting-meet with the old Tent Club, it transpired in conversation with some villagers that some of them had heard of, while others had seen, a huge beast like an elephant without tusks or a trunk, and which they were told was a rhinoceros (a creature with which they were unacquainted except by report), as being in a jungle not far off our hunting-ground. Accordingly, on the close of the day's hunting, the members of the Club returning to Calcutta, one of us remained behind to verify the report,

and was conducted the following morning to a patch of jungle on the banks of the Pealee river, a mile or two from camp, and there shown fresh footprints which were, beyond all doubt, those of a large rhinoceros.

Ordering some elephants and a portion of the camp to remain at a village close by, our friend hastened to Calcutta with the information of what he had seen with his own eyes, and to form a small party to beat up the quarters of the distinguished stranger, which being promptly done, the next evening five of us were on our way to the appointed place of meeting.

Driving in our dog-carts to within a few miles of Barra-poor, we mounted our horses, and leaving the road, we went on five or six miles to the banks of the Pealee, overtaking our servants, who had been despatched early in the day with guns, rifles, and other requisites.

Arriving at the river side, where two boats had been hired for our use, we found a strong flood tide flowing in, and were thus detained till past midnight. Under the beams of a brilliant moon near its full, and of a clear sky, sparkling with myriads of stars, an *al fresco* supper was prepared on the river bank, to which full justice was done; but neither it, nor draughts of iced claret-cup could outweigh the discomforts arising from the sultry air and the stings of swarms of rapacious and venomous mosquitoes, till we stepped into the canoes on the ebb setting in, and gliding down stream we met the southerly air blowing up the river, which drove away the pestilent little tormentors and lulled us to sleep. Landing again an hour before daybreak, our early breakfast was got ready while the elephants were sent for to camp, from a village distant a mile or two, where they had been ordered to remain till our arrival, so that the jungle near the camp might not be disturbed by their movements and foraging.

The information which awaited us on coming ashore was that the fresh spoor round the covert showed that up to the previous evening Rhino had not deserted it or crossed

the river, but he had not been actually seen. This was, on the whole, most encouraging; our apprehension being that, rendered suspicious by the attentions he was receiving, our visitor might have considered it advisable to change his quarters.

Having with us four elephants but no "howdahs," it was resolved to beat him out, and shoot him from positions taken up outside, when he should break cover. The patch of jungle to be explored was not more than eight or ten acres in extent, lying on the river bank, and nowhere dense, consisting, as it did, of dwarf palm intermingled with tamarisk bushes and high grasses; in short, as it appeared afterwards, we might have walked through it on foot. Fifty yards on its north, a water-course running down to the river had been dammed up near its mouth, on which the spoor was thick, proving that it had been much used by Rhino in his nocturnal promenades, although abundant proofs of his presence were not wanting elsewhere about the jungle side.

Our preparations being completed soon after sunrise, active operations commenced by the advance of the elephants, under the command of G. G. M., assisted by a gentleman, introduced to us who had not the privilege of his acquaintance as the "Bloody Captain," whom we found awaiting us in camp. The breeze blowing from the south, the beaters formed line on that side of the covert, while we took post on the opposite, along the water-course, which afforded some sort of cover, and in which direction, but at some little distance, there still stood a remnant of the "Soonderbun" forest. C. B. S. and I stood one on each side of the dam, in full expectation of that becoming presently the line of retreat when the enemy took flight. D. R. S. stood fifty paces west of us, partially concealed behind a bush; and lastly, D., from opposite its north-west angle, watched the jungle on our right.

Barely ten minutes after the beat commenced the shrill cries of the elephants, the shouts of their drivers, and a shot

or two fired by M. announced that the rhinoceros had been found, and warned us to be prepared. Ten minutes more passed in silence, during which the elephants, frightened out of the jungle at the first sight of their much dreaded enemy, had been brought again into line under proper control, and we, who were waiting outside with fingers on the triggers of our rifles, and eyes searching the openings in the covert, were becoming impatient, when D., who was on the extreme right up the water-course, was seen to dart out from his ambuscade, and, running some distance westward, to fire two shots in rapid succession at a huge bull rhinoceros, which was making off at full speed in the open fields beyond D. Dashing to my right, I obtained a couple of shots with a heavy rifle at a long range, but my hand being unsteady from running, one ball missed altogether, dropping beneath him, and the other told loudly on some spot forward, but not fatally. D. R. S. also fired without effect, and although we followed the cowardly brute on a bloody trail for two or three miles up to the bit of forest above mentioned, and afterwards some way into it, we saw no more of him.

Our disappointment at such a termination of an adventure commencing so auspiciously was extreme. M. had come upon the rhinoceros fast asleep in the covert, and was about to fire, when the elephants were put to flight on its rising up suddenly in front of them, not one of them being a trained "howdah" carrier, and its snorts proving too much for their nerves. However, he fired a random shot or two over the stern of his elephant as it bolted with the rest, and thought that one ball took effect somewhere or other, he could not tell where, probably in the back. The wind blowing in our faces the beast certainly could not have scented us, and we lay very still too, but he may, on reaching the skirts of the covert, have caught a glimpse of something to cause him to turn away westward, and so have escaped us. D. got two barrels at him from a hundred yards, and being a steady marksman could hardly have missed him altogether; however, he got away without leaving much blood on his tracks, and the pace

at which he scuttled along proved his wounds to have been slight.

On returning to it, the covert from which we had started the rhinoceros was thoroughly examined, and found to exhibit marks of a pretty long residence, completely verifying the villagers' story. It was a strange lair for an animal so shy and suspicious, being small in extent, open on three sides, and bounded by the river on the fourth. Directly opposite and across the water was a hamlet which we visited that afternoon to institute further inquiries regarding these animals, and were told that they were occasionally to be seen on that bank of the river a little further south, and that our friend of the morning was the first and only one known to have crossed it to the west bank, in which direction the country was open and cultivated; but he had done so some time ago, and had shown himself often below the bank when he bathed and disported himself in the river.

This beast looked a particularly fine specimen of his species, and his spoor proved that also; the horn, however, did not strike us as large. His speed across the fields caused as much surprise as his timidity. No doubt the sudden appearance of the elephants, creatures altogether new to him, had proved a shock to his nerves, and made him the poltroon he proved to be, for the rhinoceros of the Soonderbuns knows nothing of any animal larger than himself, being in this respect unlike those of Assam and the Terai, which are in the habit of meeting with wild elephants very frequently. Had a lucky shot broken a leg bone he might have been overtaken and slain, but failing that, or a bullet striking some soft place, his escape was inevitable.

Seeing how little they are disturbed, and how rarely killed by "Shikarees" and others, these great beasts must be multiplying fast in the wilderness of the Soonderbuns, for they have no foe to dread but man, and must be so acclimatised to the unwholesome climate as never to have had the attention of the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal directed to their unhappy surroundings. Probably tigers and crocodiles

may carry off a calf now and then, and the young may be destroyed when severe cyclones sweep over their resorts; but, after all, such casualties are few and far between, while at other times their lives must be as smooth and easy as those of Archdeacons and members of Boards of Revenue. There must therefore be many places in those woods in which they are plentiful, even allowing for epidemics, which are well known to occur among wild animals, such as that in Upper Assam in 1869-70, which carried off great numbers of deer and wild buffalo, and that of about the same time which destroyed many bears in Birbhoom and the Santhal Pergunnahs. Allowing for all causes affecting their increase, it still seems certain that rhinoceri must be now more numerous in some portions of the "Soonderbuns" than they ever were before, more so perhaps than anywhere in Assam and the Terai at the present day. It is unfortunate therefore for the sportsman that their haunts are so unsuited for stalking that none but the most enthusiastic care to seek them. A few native gunners make their pursuit a profitable one, and by crawling noiselessly up to them when feeding or wallowing, till within fifteen or twenty yards, despatch them with heavy charges, or, severely wounding them, follow their tracks a day or two after and secure the spoils. It may be added, for the information of those unacquainted with the "Soonderbuns," that elephants cannot be made use of in them, in consequence of the thick growth of trees and the infinity of small and great muddy creeks which intersect them in all directions, and which cannot be crossed by elephants on account of the deep mud of their sides and beds.





CHAPTER XVI.

Snipe and Snipe-shooting—A very Popular Sport in Bengal—Snipe abundant in the immediate Vicinity of Calcutta—The Reputation of being extremely Unhealthy not deserved by this Sport—Certain Rules of Precaution to be observed—A Facetious Gentleman, “who did not live long”—A Perfect Boot for Snipe-shooting still a Want—Good Shooting-grounds and Good Bags—Migration of Snipe—Early and Late Bags—Good, Bad, and Indifferent Shots—Varieties of Snipe in Bengal—Sham “Shikarees”—A Good Day after a Disappointment—A Narrow Escape—Annoyance caused by Harriers and other Hawks—Unwelcome and Unexpected Encounters.

SNIPES in Bengal, and quail in Behar, are what partridge and grouse are in England and Scotland, the unfailing annual gift of Nature to the sportsman partial to the use of the smooth-bore; indeed, without them there would be no bird-shooting in the Lower Provinces worth notice, ducks and teal only excepted, partridges having become scarce in all but a few localities, and jungle-fowl and pheasants even more so. Good wild-fowl shooting may still be obtained in many places, and golden plover are abundant in certain parts of the country, particularly on the open plains on the banks of the great rivers in Eastern Bengal; but the last is not made a special object of pursuit, nor does it furnish more than a poor kind of sport for only four or five months in the year.

Perhaps there is no place in Bengal from which, as a centre, better snipe-shooting can be obtained than in Calcutta. With the inclination and requisite leisure, a man availing himself of the different lines of railway leading out of Howrah and Sealdah, can rely upon good bags through September,

October, November, and December, or even later. I have myself made satisfactory bags as late as March on the Howrah side of the Hooghly, and within a few miles of the Government House, on the low grounds, which are the last to dry up, and on which the birds congregate thickly before their annual migration northwards.

After hog-hunting and tiger-shooting, snipe have afforded me the best and most certain sport, and one to which I have been extremely partial, notwithstanding its evil reputation as unwholesome and health-destroying. Speaking from a long experience, I have not found it injurious, proper and reasonable precautions being taken. It is, no doubt, excessively fatiguing, and those who follow it in the hot months of September and October must, as a matter of necessity, be prepared to sustain the burning rays of the sun on their heads and bodies, while their feet are chilled in the mud and water of the swamps and rice-fields. This sounds very alarming; nevertheless I do not hesitate to affirm that a man in fairly good health and condition, properly dressed and shod, and lastly, of temperate habits, may safely indulge in this sport without any danger greater than that of exposure to extreme heat, and perhaps excessive exertion when the ground is heavier than usual.

Most men who have followed this sport for any length of time have constructed for themselves a code of rules and regulations based upon their personal experiences. I have done the same, of course, and, without presuming to claim any superiority for it, I offer mine for the acceptance or rejection of young sportsmen as they may think proper, merely stating as a fact that I have found my rules so efficacious as to render this sport not only innocuous, but actually good for both body and mind; also that to this day, when my head is grey, and my muscles and fibre less tough than they were when that head was brown, I look forward with keen pleasure to a long day's snipe-shooting as beneficial alike to my health and spirits.

The first and most important consideration is to guard

the head and body against the heat of the sun, while the feet and lower portions of the legs must necessarily be wet and cold; accordingly the most suitable hat and dress must be adopted as the preliminary step. For the former, one of "sola" (or pith, as it is often called), thick, well-ventilated, and of the shape styled "Jung-Bahadur," is the best, since it protects the neck by a drooping brim behind, and its almost horizontal peak in front does not interfere with the aim when firing high, as would be the case if the front peak bent downwards like that behind, or like those of helmets. Care should be taken that this hat be made of "sola" only, and not of paper and "sola" mixed, as are those hawked about the streets and sold in the cheap native shops of Calcutta; if the former, it will be extremely light, and will give readily to pressure between finger and thumb, whereas the inferior and adulterated article will be much heavier and less yielding to the touch. Besides, having the inner band separated a quarter of an inch from the sides, the hat should have a ventilator above, or, failing that, holes should be made in the sides with a knife-blade struck horizontally into the hat so as to exclude the sun's rays. I knew an excellent sportsman who for many years persisted in wearing a white or drab chimney-pot hat when out snipe-shooting, and who shot thus covered many seasons without suffering on account of his strange predilection, and might, no doubt, have shot many more had he not been killed by a tiger, while gallantly aiding a fellow-sportsman. Such a head-cover cannot, however, be recommended, not because it would ultimately lead its wearer to the same untimely end, but because it does not protect the nape of the neck (a very delicate part) from the sun, nor the eyes from the glare. I believe that many a sun-stroke is received through the eyes. A proper "sola" hat for snipe-shooting, then, should be light and thick, and it should afford protection to the nape of the neck, as well as shade to the eyes, without impeding the aim.

When the heat is very great, as it often will be in September and October, pieces of fresh young plantain-leaves,

placed inside the hat as an inner lining, will help much to keep the head cool. As a proof of the good service rendered by the bit of that deliciously cool leaf inside the hat, it may be noted that in a couple of hours it will become brown and brittle like dry tobacco. If plantains cannot be readily obtained, any other thick green leaves may be substituted as a light wreath round the hat outside, and some protection from the sun will be obtained; but the young plantain-leaf is by far the best for that purpose.

The "sola" hat and helmet are comparatively modern inventions, although one would naturally suppose that seeing, as they must have done, many articles made of this pith by the natives, the old Indians of Clive's and Hastings' times would have been struck at once by its suitability for head covering; but this does not appear to have been the case, for even down to the days of "George Trigger" (W. H. Hutchinson, of the Bengal Civil Service), or between 1820 and 1840, his drawings in the old "Sporting Magazine" depict hog-hunters mounted upon closely-docked Arabs, all wearing a hunting-cap of leather, and his shooting-men with straw or beaver hats with or without "pugrees." We are presented also with the picture of a gentleman rejoicing in an extremely youthful face, dressed suitably in the blue frock-coat, crimson silk sash and forage-cap of the period, in pursuit of a wounded tiger some twenty feet in length! In some well-known coloured prints of hog-hunting, the sportsmen's countenances beam from under the rims of stove hats, to which the gallant artist was himself addicted, but to which the other sportsmen were not, as I can certify.

When the late James Hume, for many years the senior Magistrate of Calcutta, edited the successor to the "Sporting Magazine," about 1845 or 1846, we find beneath its yellow cover, illustrated by the late John French, sketches and drawings of men hunting and shooting, protected by "sola" hats and helmets of many patterns; it may, therefore, be assumed that these had not come into general use till after 1830, or even a few years later. Captain Williamson, writing

of snipe-shooting and the head-coverings of his time—1790 to 1819—remarks that “The power of the sun is a great drawback on the pleasures of the field. Most sportsmen provide themselves with white turbans of quilted linen, which, covering the crown of their hats, keeps off the heat. The skin of a pelican, with the soft down adhering like our swan-skin powder-puffs, is, however, much lighter and cooler. Snipe-shooting is particularly insalubrious in India, being mostly in extensive swamps; and as the birds do not lay (*sic*) but in the middle of the day, the lower extremities are freezing (!), while the head is melting with heat. It is very unpleasant to follow game through quags, and to be sometimes nearly up to the neck in mud and water. A facetious gentleman, Lieutenant George Boyd, who was an excellent and keen sportsman, whenever he went snipe-shooting used to squat down in the first sufficient puddle he came to, so as to wet himself up to the neck, observing that he found it very unpleasant to be getting wet by inches, and that by this process he put himself out of pain. He did not live long.”

Figure to yourself, as the French say, my gentle and sporting reader, some facetious friend of your own — say Lieutenant George Brown of the 90th B. I.—sitting calmly in a mud-hole up to the neck in mire, with his head covered with a pelican skin powder-puff, preparing for a day’s sport, and composing the terms of his will in anticipation of early demise! If gentlemen addicted to snipe-shooting will prime themselves for it by deep libations of beer and spirits, and next sit up to the neck in mud and water as a preliminary step, they should remember the fate of Lieutenant George Boyd, “who did not live long.”

As Captain Williamson is very severe, and properly so, on the pernicious habit of drinking to excess, a habit very common during his service in India, let us hope he set in his own person a good example to his brother officers, to whom snipe (assisted by spirits and water) were far more dangerous enemies than Moghuls or Mahrattas. If the gallant author were not good in practice, he certainly was so in preaching,

for he informs us that "of all diversions which most certainly, and I may say most speedily, sap the constitution, none can, in my mind, compare with snipe-shooting. . . . I could enumerate at least a hundred of my acquaintances who have sacrificed the most vigorous health to this very destructive sport, but who, strange to say, never could shake off the fatal habitude of indulging in what they neither were nor could be ignorant was destroying them by inches. Formerly it was not considered sufficient to indulge in this reputed diversion alone; custom had joined to it the equally baneful practice of drinking spirits in every mode of preparation." Captain Williamson condemns thus, as "equally baneful," snipe-shooting and intemperance; perhaps in his days the mud and quagmires of Bengal were more "insalubrious" than they are now; certainly the spirits and beer were so, and there was neither ice nor soda water to moderate thirst. Let the above awful warning be taken to heart by those who, neglecting their social and other duties in Calcutta, sally out in twos and threes on highdays and holidays to seek the deadly snipe in its fatal lair at Kanchrapara and parts adjacent; better far that, clad in black frock-coat and stove-pipe hat, they follow the pursuit of giddy pleasure in a round of morning calls; or, arrayed in brilliant flannels, they take to the milder and less hazardous recreation of hitting balls over nets.

If any man ever invent a perfect boot for snipe-shooting in this country let him be written down a benefactor of his kind; assuredly he will not have lived in vain. I have tried every sort without meeting with one that appeared quite satisfactory. The ordinary lacing half-boot is good, but it becomes stiff and hard after wetting, and if laced up tightly in that condition, hurts the ankles; the same pattern, made of porpoise hide, is softer but is heavier; the Elcho boot, or a modification of it, whether of leather or tanned canvas, is perhaps better. A boot of the last kind (made for me many years by Watts and Co., of Calcutta) is, on the whole, the best I have yet worn, without being perfect. Bootmakers not

uncommonly are in the habit of recommending boots with projecting soles—a detestable invention—because every time the foot is raised out of the mud a pound or two of it comes up on the projecting soles. The requirements are strength, pliancy, and lightness. Tanned canvas supplies the two last, and does not dry harsh and stiff, but soon grows out of shape, and wears out quickly. Stout calf-skin is stronger and retains its shape longer, but dries hard and hurts the foot till again wetted and sodden. On the whole I prefer the high gaiter-boot made of soft brown leather, such as those worn by me during many seasons, with soles sufficiently strong for rather rough use but no more, and pliant enough to give to every movement of the foot and toes.

I have known men who shot bare-footed with nether clothing of the simplest or scantiest, but consider such a practice a great mistake for many reasons, among others thorns, snakes, and leeches; nor has every man a skin tough enough to withstand such wear and tear.

Porpoise oil and bear's grease are good dressing for leather if applied after slow drying. Baking and roasting near a charcoal fire, as practised by one of my Orissa valets, is not recommended, as it destroys the usefulness of the boots, and leads to trouble between master and man, and does not illustrate the singular intelligence with which the natives of this country are gifted, according to certain authorities.

The snipe-shooter's dress in the hot months should be light, easy, and loose, the colour being of little importance, since perspiration and muddy water will turn all into a neutral tint very quickly. After trying many kinds I have adopted a loose shooting-coat, with a low standing collar, over a merino vest with half sleeves, moderately loose knickerbockers, and merino stockings. The coat may have as many pockets as the wearer fancies (mine has four), but none on the right breast to catch the gun stock, though but for half a second. The cotton or linen shirt is to be avoided as hot and utterly useless. I wear a China silk handkerchief round

my neck to protect it from the sun and to absorb perspiration; I also wear old kid or doeskin gloves, with the finger tips cut off close down to the middle finger joints, and strongly recommend the custom for many and obvious reasons.

I have observed that, in my own case, snipe-shooting has proved a recreation by no means unhealthy for nearly forty years, and I may truly add that it has done me good "all round;" but of course it is necessary to follow certain rules which prudence and common sense dictate; and if I venture to name a few, let it be understood that they are such as have been beneficial to me, and I do not presume to press them upon others, or to insist upon their infallibility, or general application like "Holloway's Ointment" or "Cockle's Pills"; but the young sportsman may at least give them a trial.

For a long day I like to shoot between ten in the morning and six in the evening, and for a short spell between two o'clock and sunset, taking in the former case a little refreshment about one or two o'clock while resting for an hour, consisting of sandwiches, sausage-rolls, cold pie, cutlets, or croquets, washed down with a weak "peg," well iced, if ice be procurable. I never drink while shooting, no matter how thirsty I may be, but if compelled to moisten my mouth and lips, do so with weak brandy and water, rinsing my mouth only with it; and I often shoot for three hours in the hottest weather without requiring to do even that much. My rule is never to smoke in the sun, and not to do so till the shooting is over for the day. Before starting on a long trudge through the mud and water, if ice be at hand, I drink one or two tumblers of ice-cold water; and when the shooting is over I take care to be on the move till I can put on dry clothes, after soaking my feet for a quarter of an hour in water as hot as I can bear, and taking a tepid bath. These rites and ceremonies being observed I am ready for my dinner, and after it for whist or billiards till midnight, although I may have been out from nine or ten in the morning till nightfall.

I think that three days in the week is as often as most

men can go out in the hot months, without suffering from over-fatigue and exposure to the sun. In the cold season any one may shoot daily of course, and be none the worse for it, but rather the contrary. At that time of the year, I for one, should like to hunt and shoot six days in the week, and read, write, fill cartridges, look to the guns and rifles, and sharpen spears on the seventh; and thus I should do far less mischief to my fellow-men than those who labour hard at their desks, and in the courts in the vain attempts to manufacture silk purses out of sows' ears, or to find the needle of truth in the haystack of falsehood and rascality. The cold season being over, I should like to retire gracefully like my betters to cool and breezy mountain retreats, to practise tennis and to cultivate the social arts, till the return of the health-restoring north-west breeze enables me once more to mingle with the common herd of toilers in the plains. There is a ring of selfishness not to say brutality in the above, but the sentiment expressed is only human-nature, and must contain in it something lofty, for it is put in practice by the highest and wisest of our leading men.

To men in weak or impaired health snipe-shooting must of necessity be very injurious, and it should not be indulged in by such; but all others who are moderate and temperate in their habits may follow that sport to their heart's content, without any apprehension of evil results, *so long as they observe rules dictated by common sense.*

I must apologise for the egoism of some of the above remarks, but when one ventures to offer suggestions based upon personal experiences, it becomes difficult to steer clear of what may seem presumption; however let the desire to serve my young brother sportsmen extenuate that fault.

Considering the number of men who go out shooting during the season from Calcutta, Barrackpoor, Dum-dum, Alipoor, and other places, all near the "City of Evil Smells," the bags that are often made are remarkable. The snipe have no rest or peace, for when Europeans are not out after them, native "Shikarees" are hard at work with guns and nets to supply the Calcutta

market; so that the birds are never given a chance to accumulate in such numbers as otherwise they certainly would do. A good shot can usually secure his twenty to thirty couple, and two shooting together with straight powder forty to sixty. The best day I myself ever had, and that by no means a long one (from eleven to four or five o'clock), ended with ninety-seven and a half couple to three guns; another day, shooting with a friend at Kanchrapara, two other guns being out also, we got a hundred couple between us in about five hours, but I rarely visited that famous ground, it being too much shot over by men from Calcutta and Barrackpoor, though it is undoubtedly one of the choicest resorts of snipe in all Bengal. A ground near Ranaghat is, for about a week or ten days in the season, still better; and there are many other good places on both sides of the Hooghly river, from ten to sixty miles up the railway lines, besides others four to ten miles off them further inland. A place about four miles east of the Nyhatty station on the Eastern Bengal line, has been a favourite of mine for some years, and has afforded me good sport, and heavy bags of thirty to fifty couple in four or five hours during the hottest time of the day in September and October. The grand secret of good sport is to be on the ground during the week or fortnight when it is at its prime.

The bags made in Arracan, near Akyab, and in some parts of the Bombay Presidency are as heavy or heavier; also in the North-west Province, bags of fifty and sixty couple are not uncommon; but on the whole Bengal can probably boast of a wider field for the snipe-shooter's favourite pursuit than any country I have heard or read of in the four (or is it five?) quarters of the globe; after all, the pleasure is not in shooting great numbers, but in securing moderate bags of twenty or thirty couple on fair walking ground, varied by shots at teal, quail, hares, partridge, and golden plover; and in that light I have enjoyed better sport in some parts of Manbhoom than anywhere, when in the cold season and with comparatively easy walking, thirty to forty couple have fallen to two

or three guns, together with almost as many of other birds, and a hare or two also.

I knew a man, a long-legged Scot in the Civil Service, whose invariable custom was to go out after snipe on the 12th of August every year (St. Grouse's day), and to pick up two, three, or four early birds. I do not care to go out myself before the first week of September, by which time five or six couple may grace the stick after as many hours toiling through the rice fields; nor do I care to wet my boots for less. I have shot as many as eleven and a-half couple on the 20th of August, in two or three hours of the afternoon, near Bholagunge, at the southern base of the Khassia hills, and have remarked that snipe appear earlier and leave later in Sylhet than elsewhere in Bengal; and thus I have made a good bag behind the Civil Station of that name late in April after some heavy showers had fallen and moistened the ground.

On their first arrival in Bengal, from their distant breeding grounds in the north, about the middle of August, the birds are, as might be naturally expected, poor and thin; but two or three weeks in the Bengal paddy-fields do wonders, so that by the middle of September, snipe are generally quite plump.

It is useless to seek snipe on ground that feels hard under foot, no matter whether the young rice or the weeds growing upon it look most inviting, and water lies upon it an inch or two deep; and the same may be said of ground covered by fresh rain-water. The experienced sportsman will at once know by the softness of the soil under foot whether he is on suitable ground. On excessively hot days, snipe desert before noon the moist grass and paddy-fields for the shelter of bushes, scrub or high cultivation, such as jute, hemp, or sugar-cane; in stormy weather they do the same, and may then be seen in gardens and grounds round houses within the station itself. As the season advances, they will resort in the evening to the borders of ponds, ditches, and other stagnant water, and may then be easily detected, trying to conceal

themselves among the low weeds in which they find their food. We used to get some pretty shooting in the dry grass along the sea-shore in Hidgelee and Balasore, in the months of March and April, a little before sunset; picking up in addition to a few couple of snipe, a brace or two of partridges and quail, an occasional hare, and some golden plover, on the breezy downs.

The question of what is really good shooting is often mooted and discussed; and next, what is super-excellent? In the course of a long experience one meets of course with some first-rate shots, many more moderately good ones, and not a few undeniably bad. Basing my opinion on what I have myself observed, I am disposed to consider as a fairly average good shot, a man who bags two birds in three shots in the course of a long trudge of some hours, taking the birds as they rise, and allowing for slips of the feet, and other mishaps which may occur just as the trigger is pulled, for shots fired over-hastily, or at birds almost beyond range; and so forth. A man who kills in three out of four shots, must I think be classified as a really good shot; and one who does still better in the long run, an exceptionally good one, hard to beat. There are times when one may kill eight, ten, or a dozen birds without a single miss, but such instances are not very common, and are far better remembered than those in which four or five misses have been made in succession. The greatest number I have myself bagged without a miss is fourteen, but my record must frequently be beaten by good shots. Mr. W. H. C. of the Bengal Police, killed one day seventeen birds in succession, without a single miss, and I have heard stories of the shooting of his brother (the late Mr. F. C.) that are marvellous; and they are omitted here, not because I entertain any doubt of their absolute correctness, but because I neither witnessed such feats of skill, nor have had them authenticated by the performer. I am informed that Mr. W. F. S., of the same service, has similarly killed twenty and more snipe, without a miss, both in Ireland and in India; and there are of course many first-rate shots

in all three Presidencies. On the other hand, the greatest number of misses in succession scored by some men is prodigious; and a lesson of true Christian resignation, and reliance on the goodness of Providence, may be learned by watching one of these contented spirits, as he trudges through the mud, emptying his sack of cartridges into the air, happy and jubilant if a bird fall now and then at long intervals; smiling in the midst of his almost fruitless toils, and hopeful of better things in the distant future.

I prefer No. 9 shot early in the season and when the birds lie well, and No. 8 at other times. With such I have seen snipe dropped at seventy to eighty paces, the last very long shot made by me being lately near Khoolna with No. 9 shot, fired with three drams of powder out of a 12-bore (not choke) gun by Alexander Henry, the bird falling dead at seventy-six paces immediately after it was hit.

Some men prefer to let their birds get well away on the wing before firing, and to take them in settled flight, but I have always followed the other course, which is to shoot down the bird as it rises as quickly as possible, and before it zig-zags in its flight after the first upward rush out of the grass or green paddy. The former style is no doubt the prettier, but the latter is the more profitable if a good bag be desired, and a quick eye and hand be not wanting.

When there is a smart cold breeze blowing under a cloudy and lowering sky, the birds will be wild, and will fly low, making the attainment of a good bag hopeless, because not only are they flushed at a distance, but by skimming just over the brown or green tinted ground they cannot be very distinctly seen in the gloomy atmosphere. On the contrary, when the wind softly bends the tops of the blades of grass and green rice, and the sun shines out hotly and brightly from an almost cloudless sky, the birds will lie close, and springing up within twenty or thirty yards from the gun, will fly more heavily than in chilly and gloomy weather.

I have failed to convince myself that snipe regulate their flight according to the direction of the wind, as is usually

asserted. Shooting during my early years in India, it was my custom to take note of this alleged habit of the bird, till I became satisfied of its uncertainty, and the flight up-wind came to be regarded as mythical, or at least inapplicable to the Bengal snipe, which, according to my observations, aims rather at getting quickly out of range than taking the wind direction to guide its flight.

Although birds may often rise in wisps, two or more rarely fall together to a single barrel; to the best of my recollection I have seen three thus fall together only twice or thrice. Double shots are, of course, common, and often the rule when birds lie well and are plentiful; and it is no unusual thing for a good and steady shot to have six or eight birds down on the ground before and around him at the same time, all shot while he moved forward a pace or two. A snipe may now and then be captured by hand if asleep in the noontide heat or greatly frightened by much firing; but ordinarily that bird, next to the curlew, the ruddy sheldrake, and the wild goose, is the most difficult to surprise.

The remark is common that snipe are extremely capricious, being found one day in great numbers on the ground from which they are altogether absent on another; or that they rise in wisps on one side of a path or ridge, and only singly at long intervals on the other, though the soil is apparently precisely similar on both sides. This seeming caprice is accounted for by the knowledge the birds possess of the quality of the feeding and resting grounds, according to the weather, time of day, comparative hardness or softness of the earth, the nature of food to be obtained, and other good and sufficient reasons. Sometimes a score or two of snipe may be observed to desert their ordinary resorts and to pack together on a bit of low grass or piece of bare ploughed land, looking from a distance like a flock of plover. When shooting round large "jheels," it will be remarked that these birds prefer as their resting-places during the greatest heat of the day the reeds, rushes, and water-lilies in the centre, out of which they rise very sluggishly on the near approach of the canoe, in which

the sportsman pursues wild-fowl, offering such easy shots as almost to tempt him to fire, though by so doing he must to a certainty forfeit a right and left into the flocks of ducks and teal he may be nearing cautiously. Morning and evening the same birds will be on the feed among the soft green grass or young paddy growing on the borders of the "jheel," at which time they will afford good sport for two or three hours.

I am unable to state the proportion of the pin-tail to the common snipe in Bengal. The difference between them is often overlooked, but I think the latter variety far more plentiful than the other. On one occasion my companion and I took the trouble to examine a hundred birds shot in the Hooghly district, with the result of only one pin-tail, being clearly distinguished by the two sharp and stiff pin-like outer tail-feathers. The numbers of these two varieties are rarely marked by the sportsmen who have shot them.

Those who have followed this sport much, must have noticed now and then, perhaps only half-a-dozen times in the course of the season, a larger and heavier bird than the common snipe, and with more white on the breast. What this variety may be, is unknown to me by name; but that there is such a one I cannot doubt.

The jack and painted snipe are abundant in certain localities specially suited to their tastes, such as reeds and grass for the former, and swamps, bushes, and rank weeds for the latter which breed in India, or at least in Bengal and Assam. I have shot as many as six or seven jacks in the day, and have always found them present in the proper season in the tall reeds on the good snipe ground near Ranaghat already mentioned. The painted snipe is common throughout the country; generally found in pairs, it associates in great numbers about the breeding times and places. On one occasion, while beating up a tiger in a swampy bush jungle in Assam, these birds rose before me in dozens, and settled again quickly, after a short flight of a score or two of yards; that spot being probably their nesting place, and

otherwise adapted in all respects to their tastes and habits.

I have never seen a wood-snipe in Bengal, Behar, Orissa, or Chotah Nagpoor, but have done so in Assam, and one day bagged six in that province, while in quest of sambur, with the help of a friend. These birds were flushed out of a marsh surrounded by trees and bushes, all rising within the space of three or four acres, and were shot without a miss, their flight being heavy and laboured, much resembling that of a woodcock, for which bird my friend mistook the first which rose before us. The wood-snipe is a fine bird, half as large and heavy again as the common snipe. I have met with it too in Sylhet, on ground similar to that above described, and believe it may be found in Cachar and Chittagong.

The woodcock is very rarely seen in the plains. I once flushed one in Cachar, when on the tracks of a tiger in some tall reeds, and another in Sibsagur, when in pursuit of a wounded bull buffalo. This bird is not uncommon on the Khassia Hills, and one may be picked up now and then in Chittagong. Although against my own experience, I am disposed to believe that it may be found on rare occasions at the base of the Himalayas, and on the high plateaux of Hazaribagh and Lohaduggah.

There is a sort of sportsman about Calcutta who, unable or unwilling to look up the snipe for himself, keeps in his pay one or more natives, whose duty it is to discover the places where the birds lie thickly, and then to lead their employer to them before they are found and shot over by others. These natives dub themselves "Shikarees," but they are nothing of the sort, being generally village loafers, with a preference for a comparatively idle life on good pay, over regular work on ordinary wages; some may be bird-netters; a few may even shoot for the Calcutta market; but to the respectable title of "Shikaree" they have no right whatever in its higher and proper sense. I have been told that these fellows receive from their employers as much as a rupee for every ten or a dozen birds flushed, in addition to some fixed

wages ; accordingly, their game is to watch and follow those sportsmen who look up snipe for themselves, or to worm out of their attendants the information, which is promptly conveyed to their masters in Calcutta, who hasten to reap where they have neither ploughed nor sown. One of this fraternity has often attached himself to me quite uninvited, and annoyed me with his silly exclamations of "Mark ! mark !" whether the snipe rose within or beyond range, as if I could not see the bird myself at least as well as he could ; but this, I suspect, is taught him by his employer, who possibly may be too indolent to mark the bird himself ; and it may also form the principal foundation to support his title of "Shikaree." Judging by their bearing and look of self-importance, I have reason to believe that these men are treated with great respect and deference by their "sporting" employers ; and their astonishment and disgust at being ordered to be silent, and to pick up the birds only, is amusing in the extreme. However, no doubt they are a necessary product of the times, and supply a want felt in certain quarters.

Having one season during the months of September and October, shot a good deal in the neighbourhood of the Nyhatty Railway station, a relation and I discovered, some three miles from it, a splendid snipe ground in prime condition rather late one afternoon, and after loading our sticks with twenty-six couple in the course of a couple of hours, we returned home, with the full intention of paying it an early visit and making off it a grand bag. On the second morning afterwards, on reaching about ten o'clock our precious discovery, we found upon it two guns hard at work, banging away merrily, and it subsequently transpired that one of these pseudo-"Shikarees," had got news of our find from a porter who carried a basket of creature comforts, and promptly conveying the same to his employers, had brought them on the ground betimes to forestall us, thus playing the "provider" to the two tigers in possession of our ground. Leaving the poachers to enjoy themselves to their fill, we trudged onwards several miles bagging only two or three couple of

snipe, and about noon, when almost despairing of sport for that day, we called a halt for refreshment and consultation. While resting, not in the best of humours, we accosted a woman who chanced to pass us with a load of country vegetables, who proving more communicative and good-natured than usual, informed us, after learning our present business, that if we went a couple of miles to some lowlands on the right, we should find abundance of birds of many kinds, of which she did not know the names—both waders and swimmers, with beaks of all lengths, and of flight of various sorts. An hour later we came to a piece of clear water, and saw upon it, and along its banks, birds of many kinds both small and great—cranes, herons, coots, jacanas, storks, black and white ibis, red-shanks, whistling and cattan teal, a great company of feathered bipeds, exactly as our almost unique fair informant had said; but still we were not happy, for we saw not what we sought. Bordering the clear water on both sides were fields of green rice, with here and there brown patches of grass or reeds growing upon ground soft and wet, the time being the middle of October; accordingly cheered up by the sight before us we set to work.

Directing the men who carried our canteens to keep abreast of us on the higher ground on the right; N. and I formed line with three attendants with snipe-sticks and bags of reserve ammunition, facing westward, with our left on the edge of the water. We had barely set foot in the soft yielding soil of the first field, when up rose a wisp of half-a-dozen snipe, fat and heavy with good feeding, out of which I got a right and left, while N. bagged a third which he flushed on the right immediately afterwards; and thus advancing slowly and deliberately for an hour, we picked up birds rapidly, losing one now and again among the higher growth of rushes and reeds, but on the whole shooting well, considering the previous long and hot walk. By half-past two o'clock we reached the western extremity of the lakelet, twenty-four couple of snipe suspended on our sticks, N. much done up by the excessive heat, the sky being clear and there

being little or no breeze; otherwise six or eight more might have been added to the bag. Obtaining some shade from a small tree we sat down to rest and refresh, but before N. could touch a morsel of food, he had to be dosed with a little iced brandy and water, and his head and neck well soused in abundance of iced water, with which remedies he was brought round in about half-an-hour, and saved from what might have proved a dangerous sunstroke. A number of birds having gone back and settled behind us, we walked over the same ground once more towards the eastern end of the water, adding twelve couple more to our bag, and then it behoved us to cross over to the other side, on which we had seen some birds settle. Boat or raft there was none, accordingly hitting off a cattle track we waded in cautiously, and succeeded in crossing to the opposite bank with our ammunition and guns dry, but wet ourselves to the waist. A walk of a mile or two westward put ten and a half couple more on our sticks, with which we had to be satisfied, the sun having sunk low, and there being a long trudge before us to reach the railway station to catch our train in good time.

On arriving at the station we found our friends the poachers bathed and dressed, they having preceded us by an hour; they were resting and enjoying a smoke when we came in followed by one of our servants, carrying a half-filled snipe-stick from which dangled a dozen birds. The sight of so small a bag developed a grin on their faces, which faded away on the entrance of another attendant with a heavily weighted stick; finally, when the third arrived with the rest of the forty-six and a half couple, their faces "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and they softly whistled their way to the other end of the platform, while we in our turn tubbed and dressed in the travellers' room. Ultimately we all four went down together amicably in the same train, and it then came out that their bag of twenty-eight couple had been made in the course of six or seven hours, upon the ground we had discovered two days before, in passing which at ten that morning we had heard the sounds of heavy firing, they having

been informed of our coming, and purposely forestalling us by an hour or two. But for these two guns being on our ground before us, I feel sure that N. and I should that day have secured sixty or seventy couple, as the ground shot over by us was but a continuation of the other, and we should assuredly have covered them both.

In the wilder parts of the country one may encounter, while in pursuit of snipe, larger game, not to be stopped by a charge of small shot. It is as well, therefore, to be provided in such cases with ball cartridges, if not with a double rifle. At all times it is imperative upon sportsmen to keep a bright look out for snakes, which are addicted to an inconvenient habit of basking in the sun upon the low ridges which divide rice-fields, and serve as miniature embankments to retain water on them. I have known them to seize a wounded bird, and on one occasion I narrowly escaped the bite of a black cobra, which had picked up a snipe shot by me, and was gliding away with it in its mouth, when running up I put my hand upon it, intending to take up what I believed to be a fluttering bird attempting to get away. Harriers and some other kinds of hawks are frequently most annoying in following the gunner and defrauding him of his birds by their rapid swoops; but, on the other hand, they serve to force birds to lie close, by quartering the fields in search of prey.

I went out one morning, early in the month of September, to shoot snipe on the island of Shahazpoor with T., the local official magnate, and had put upon the stick three or four birds, then far from plentiful, when I came upon the fresh foot-prints of a tiger on the muddy crest of a dividing ridge of the fields we were walking over, and on quickly looking ahead, detected the animal himself as he slouched into a line of tree and bush covert a few hundred paces in front, into which he disappeared after a glance at us over his shoulder. We had roused our friend in the green rice, in which he had been lying on the look-out for some trespassing bullock or buffalo. I had a rifle with me, but it was not handed me

promptly enough by the servant who carried it, and who, according to custom, had loitered behind to enable me to get a long shot.

Nor was this the only unexpected *rencontre* of the morning, for while cautiously reconnoitring the edge of the jungle entered by the tiger, I put up within a few score yards of the spot where he had disappeared from view, a small herd of a dozen or fourteen wild buffalo, and brought down, with both barrels fired into his shoulder, the master bull, which, darting forward a few yards, fell with a mighty crash in the bushes. Hastening along the covert, as the rest of the herd noisily pushed their way through it, I gained the end just as the herd having cleared it were on the point of crossing a muddy creek at its extremity, and there I brought down two more by close shots, but both cows, as unluckily proved to be the case. It became quite clear, then, that the tiger, fully aware of the presence of the buffaloes in the jungle, in which he feared to attack them while together in a body, had crouched down among the green rice, knowing full well that the buffaloes would presently come out to graze upon it, when an opportunity might be given him to strike down a calf or cow feeding some distance apart from the others; and although he might be driven off the body of his prey by the furious charge of the herd, his supper for that and one or two succeeding nights would at least be secured.

On another occasion, while out snipe-shooting some fourteen miles from Cuttack, in the early rice of September, when the fields were very wet, and there was a good deal of water all over the country, I was charged open-mouthed by a crocodile, which I succeeded in astonishing far more effectually than he had hoped to do me, since, as luck would have it, I had noticed his ugly tracks upon the soft mud, and had exchanged ball for shot cartridges before following them. Accordingly when he came at me, emitting a loud and harsh hissing sound, I allowed him to approach within a couple of paces, and then put a bullet down his throat, as he obligingly held his mouth open, which caused him to turn quickly round

and waddle away as fast as he had come till he had made off a dozen yards, and then he turned over as dead as Julius Cæsar. This was a young reptile ten feet in length, but precociously vicious, or unnaturally stupid ; for it is difficult to account for his attacking me as he did, instead of doing his best to give me a wide berth and plenty of sea-room to steer my own course, and to avoid a collision. I presume I had gained upon him, and therefore finding flight useless, he turned savagely round to frighten me from further pursuit.





CHAPTER XVII.

Wild-fowl shooting—Wild-fowl very abundant in certain Localities—The Chilka Lake in Pooree—Boats and Canoes suitable for Duck-shooting—Shooting by Moonlight—Shooting on Foot—A fine Forest Country without Game—Crocodiles—The “Garial”—The great “Jheels” of the Fareedpoor District—A miserable Community—Good Sport.

THIRTY years ago wild fowl of all kinds were as plentiful in Bengal during the cold season as snipe are still, but they are now found in considerable numbers only at the mouths of great rivers, and in remote lagoons and backwaters, where they feed in comparative peace, rarely disturbed by European sportsmen or native pot-hunters.

During the day, between nine or ten in the morning and four in the afternoon, ducks and teal may be seen drifting calmly with the current of the great inland streams, just keeping clear of the course of passing boats and steamers; while enormous flocks of geese and ruddy sheldrakes cover the lowest sand-banks, and, in company with pelicans, in hundreds pass in security the hottest hours of the day, uttering now and then a low quack of warning on the approach of a fisherman's canoe or other river-craft; but, as four in the afternoon draws near, they rouse up with a lazy flap or two of their strong wings, and with much noise and outcry, wend their way in great companies to their feeding-grounds; the geese and sheldrakes to fields from which the rice-crops have been recently removed, and the rest to inland lakes and lagoons, or to shallow backwaters of great rivers.

There are still places in the country where wild-fowl

congregate in tens of thousands, as in the Chilka lake in Pooree, in the Chullan "jheel" in Rajshai and Pubna, and on the chain of lagoons extending for fifty miles a league or two from, and parallel with, the left bank of the Muddoomuttee river, which divides the districts of Jessore and Fareedpoor. Wild-fowl of almost every species and in vast multitudes resort also to the sea-coast of Balasore, particularly about the mouth of the Damrah river, where excellent sport may be relied on in the cold season, and in the first weeks of it more especially. There are besides many "jheels," or lagoons, scattered about the interior of the country, where wild-fowl are sufficiently abundant for good sport, particularly in Sylhet and Assam, where may be found many varieties; among others sometimes that rare visitant of the Lower Provinces, the handsome mallard, the king of wild-ducks.

To the Chilka lake must be awarded the palm for the most enjoyable shooting from "dinghees," or canoes, since it presents immense varieties, together with incredible numbers, added to pretty scenery and sea air. Some of the "jheels" in the Fareedpoor district can make an equal show as to numbers, but not so in respect of species and varieties; for geese, flamingoes, "koolung," spoonbills, and others, plentiful on and around the Chilka, are not to be found on them.

The water of the Chilka is salt or brackish, according to the season, and in it there grows along the shore a weed very attractive to wild-fowl. This weed (of which the proper name is unknown to me) will be found in the shallow and tranquil water along the shores of the little islets and sand-banks on their landward side; and among it will be seen myriads of ducks and teal, while the larger wild-fowl and countless waders line the shores or feed in the fields above among the rice-stubble. In the noontide heat, and if unmolested for a little while, these birds may be seen reposing in such immense flocks as to cover many square acres of the surface of the still waters under the lee of the land, and, if disturbed by a shot at such a time, they will rise together in tens of thousands, with a sound like thunder or distant salvos

of heavy artillery, darkening the air as they circle and wheel above in such numbers as must be seen to be realised. Armed with a duck-gun and a double 12-bore, capable of sustaining a charge of three and a-half to four drams of powder, I could have filled before noon a good-sized canoe to its gunwale had I chosen to do so; but I preferred to content myself with three or four couple of geese, a brace or two of the "koolung" crane, an odd flamingo or two for their beautiful feathers, a dozen or two of golden plover, and lastly and chiefly, with thirty or forty ducks and teal of at least half a score of varieties. Starting about sunrise on a December or January morning, when a light mist hangs over the water, and the cool north breeze gently ruffles its surface, the gunner may occasionally land to stretch his legs and vary his sport by looking up the birds at feed in the fields; but the greater part of his bag will be made from his canoe, seated in which he will obtain abundance of long shots "into the brown" with his duck-gun, besides single and double ones at solitary birds and flights whirling overhead in alarm and confusion.

There is a kind of canoe from sixteen to twenty feet in length, with a beam of three and a-half at the broadest part, which is the most suitable for this sport. These are in common use in Eastern Bengal in particular, and are very graceful in form, tapering away in beautiful lines to a point at each end—buoyant, easily worked, and capable of floating in less than a foot of water. A light, elastic, and yet strong deck is formed of split bamboos fastened together with cane or twine, in pieces about a yard in length, which are laid down a few inches below the gunwales. On this moveable deck, a round stool of native manufacture being placed about seven feet from the bows, and the gunner seated upon it with his guns and ammunition before him, shots can be fired to the front and both sides with ease, and without disturbing the balance of his craft. A bush or a bundle of grass is sometimes fixed on the bows as a sort of screen, but it rarely answers any useful purpose, since it cannot conceal those in the boat; and if the birds are not disposed to permit its

approach within range, under the impression that it is only one of those they are in the daily habit of seeing manned by fishermen and others, they will not be deceived by a contrivance such as the above.

The canoe is propelled by poles in shallow, and by paddles in deep water, by two men, standing or sitting, one at each end. Sometimes when nearing a flock of birds on the alert and ready to take wing, the men step out if the depth of water be not more than four feet, and hiding behind the stern as far as is possible, they push the canoe gently onwards till a shot be obtained. When there is no current, nor obstruction met with from weeds and water lilies, such a canoe can be worked with paddles up to a speed of six miles an hour; and if poled through weeds, at half that rate, if the boatmen be strong and experienced.

The usual custom is to take a servant on such occasions, who should sit behind his master on the bottom of the boat, and not upon the bamboo deck, and his dress should assimilate as nearly as possible with that of the boatmen; in other words, it should consist of only a yard or two of cotton stuff in addition to the skull-cap, or "pugree." The gunner himself must eschew white and all brilliant colours on his own person, restricting himself to grey, green, or brown. Lastly, a basket containing the materials for a substantial meal, a flask of whisky or brandy, a bottle or two of soda, and a "serai" of drinking water should always form a part of the duck-shooter's outfit, since starting as he should at sunrise, he may not return to camp before nightfall. A good binocular and an umbrella will prove useful; the former to distinguish the varieties of the birds, and the latter for protection against the mid-day, or the still hotter post-meridian sun of Southern Bengal or Orissa, when the sport is over for the day or the gunner rests an hour for refreshment.

Such boats as have been described above can be hired without difficulty in the inland "jheels" and lakes, but not so easily on the "Chilka," where a different kind is commonly used. The daily hire is a rupee each, *i.e.*, eight annas to be

given to the owner of the craft, and four annas to each of the two boatmen; and if a few birds of the less choice species be added, complete satisfaction will be afforded.

It is usual to take a second boat as a tender, to reconnoitre, to pick up wounded birds, and to make itself generally useful in many ways. The duty of retrieving the wounded calls for promptitude, perseverance, and keen vision, without which many birds will succeed in escaping, especially among water-lilies and cabbages, under which they conceal themselves with the greatest cunning, to fall victims ultimately to the great eagles and hawks, or to those large and voracious fishes—the “boalee” and the “sal.” The number of shots fired at disabled ducks and pochards, before they are finally killed and hauled on board is astonishing; as swimming with the body submerged and the top of the head only showing above water, they appear to see the shot coming and to dive in good time to avoid it. For the purpose of retrieving such I have found a second gun loaded with No. 6 or 7 shot very useful, it being inexpedient to waste on these dodgers cartridges heavily charged for long ranges with No. 2 or 3.

I have remarked that gadwals, pintails, and red-crested pochards lie closer among weeds and lilies in the centres of great “jheels,” between one and four in the afternoon than at any other times, rising then singly or in small numbers as the canoe is propelled towards them at ranges varying from seventy to eighty yards, rarely less, though far too often at greater distances; but now and again some less wary bird will fall a victim to his sleepiness at a shorter range. At such times a really good shot provided with a strong shooting 12-bore, loaded with wire cartridges of No. 2 or 3 shot may enjoy fine sport, although he may not make rapid additions to the day’s bag, since many a winged bird will infallibly elude his search.

Having made the experiment of duck-shooting by the light of the moon at or near its full, I am unable to write in its favour; because, notwithstanding that the birds may be

within a moderate range in hundreds or thousands, and their close vicinity be proclaimed by much quacking and fluttering of wings as they feed unsuspecting of danger, yet it is extremely difficult to distinguish their forms in the weeds; and though a right and left fired at them first on the water and next on the wing, may take effect upon a score or more, still it is almost impossible to retrieve the wounded, and very difficult to find the dead, unless they chance to lie in clear water. Such drawbacks apart, night shooting is always attended by some danger to health, as the air of the swamps is excessively unwholesome after sunset.

All who have followed this sport much in their lives, must admit that they have frequently lost their temper by the proceedings of those aggravating birds, the bald or black coots, which will persist in giving themselves the airs of ducks and teal, conceitedly inviting shots at themselves while they cover their betters by interposing their unwelcome presence. During the early forenoon and the evening, these coots keep much to the weedy parts of the lakes, but towards noon they congregate in great numbers in the open water, associating with gadwals, red-headed and crested pochards, round which birds they establish outlying pickets, and make off with much fluttering of wings on the water on the approach of the gunner's canoe, disturbing the ducks and completely spoiling sport. This coot as well as the handsomer purple variety, is much fancied by the natives as an article of food, and therefore it is advisable to shoot a score or two of them, while returning homewards, for servants and crews.

There are other birds on the "jheels" quite as annoying as the black coots, and they are the greater and lesser whistling teal, which breeding in them in the rainy season make them their permanent home, but are not regarded as game by old sportsmen. These noisy birds rising in countless thousands, keep the choicer species in perpetual alarm and unrest, by their loud and incessant whistling cries as they wheel around and above the gunner's head just beyond range. I have no hesitation in stating, that I have seen at one

moment upon the extensive "jheels" lying east of the Mud-doomuttee river, as many as forty or fifty thousand of them on the wing, and I never fail to execute justice upon some of them for the benefit of my attendants as I paddle back to camp, the natives highly approving of their rather fishy flavour.

The great fishing eagles and hawks too are a nuisance, swooping down upon winged birds and carrying them off almost from the bows of the canoes in the boldest and most impudent manner; as if considering themselves the real proprietors of the wild-fowl, they insist upon taking toll in kind, they also flutter and alarm the ducks by their close attendance upon the gunners, and make themselves exceedingly obnoxious in every way, and should therefore be made examples of in a few instances.

Hitherto shooting on lakes and lagoons only has been treated of, but there is another, and to my mind a far pleasanter mode of following this sport, and that is by walking along the sides of narrow "jheels" and water-courses frequented by wild-fowl and shooting them from shore. There are many such pieces of water in this country which can be commanded by a gun half-way across, so that two guns—one on each side—can completely cover them; but a Rob Roy or other light description of boat is essential for good sport, or many winged birds will of necessity be lost.

I know no district in which this particular kind of shooting can be so thoroughly enjoyed as Manbhoom, where are numerous sheets of water formed by the banking up of the lower ends of hollows and slopes, locally known as "bunds;" some of considerable extent, and others narrow enough to be within easy range to their middle. Below these reservoirs, maintained for irrigation, and beneath their lower or embanked extremities, are terraced rice-fields, into which some water percolates incessantly, keeping them soft, moist, and weedy till the close of the cold season, and very attractive to snipe, which resort to them in great numbers, even so late as April. These terraces are called "habals," and are

very precious in the estimation of snipe-shooters; and as they are plentifully scattered over Manbhoom, a couple of guns may, in the course of a long day, shoot over six or eight, riding from one to another, securing without fail good bags of gadwals, pochards, pintail, and teal, as well as twenty or thirty couple of snipe, with a few grey partridges, quail, and hares. A light boat of some sort should accompany the sportsman, slung on a pole, and utilised on the march as a convenient mode of transport for refreshments and reserve ammunition. As labour is cheap in that part of the country, the cost of carriage will be small, while the usefulness of the boat will be very great.

The bar-headed goose is rarely found on these waters, and, so far as I am aware, there is only one tank or "bund" to which the black-backed goose ever resorts in the proper season. It is in the Raipoor jurisdiction, and is enclosed on three sides by tree-jungle, very convenient for the stalker; but I know no reason why it alone should attract that fine bird.

The lover of pretty scenery will be well repaid for a trip to the rapids of the "Soobunreeka" river in the south of the same district, while his gun will find ample employment among the wild-fowl which resort to them in numbers, particularly that beautiful little bird, the true teal. The population is very sparse thereabouts, and the hills are well wooded, some of the forest being comparatively open and admirably suited to the habits of big game; one would expect therefore to find them abundant in that locality, but such is not the case. In the rainy season a few wild elephants are passing visitors, and "gour" also may occasionally be such, but I cannot say that I have ever seen their foot-prints there, nor have I ever shot sambur or axis in that neighbourhood, although both are to be found, no doubt, in small numbers. Tigers are almost unheard of, and panthers are by no means common; bears and barking-deer seemingly keep possession of these beautiful coverts.

It is strange that more of the large game of the country

do not resort to such woods, in which they will find all they revel in, peace and the absence of man included. Nor is such absence of big game a modern condition of things, for I have read in an official report on the state of Manbhoom, written in 1832, after the writer had traversed every part of it, immediately after the insurrections in that and the adjoining Singbhoom district, that he had been greatly impressed by the paucity of big game in the country, and of the dangerous kinds in particular. Bears were far more plentiful thirty years ago than at present, and I have known seven to be shot by one sportsman in the day, not ten miles from Rogonath-poor, which itself was a famous place for them, although now only visited by some stray individual on the move.

If a small Rob Roy be used for shooting, or a narrow dug-out, some caution is necessary, as they are apt to upset on any sudden turn being made to right or left by the gunner to secure a quick shot, as once occurred to a near relative of mine in Manbhoom, who narrowly escaped drowning, though a good swimmer, from being entangled among weeds, through which he could not penetrate to the bank. As it was, he was nearly exhausted before the spirit and intelligence of a native saved him; and when he reached land, it was long before he was able to rise and walk off, having lost his gun, ammunition, and other articles in the deep water where his canoe upset. A considerable crowd had collected from a neighbouring village, helplessly bewailing the fate of the drowning man, but without making any efforts to rescue him, till at length one, cooler or more energetic than his fellows, having fetched a couple of water-jars, swam out to his assistance. One of these large globular jars (called "gharas" or "thilias" in the vernacular), being inverted, will support a man in the water with ease.

It is also necessary to be cautious before wading deep into swamps, especially those near tidal rivers, as they may harbour crocodiles, of which reptiles there are, I believe, three distinct species in the Lower Provinces, besides the "gharial," or long-nosed *Gavialis gangeticus* (*Gharialis gangeticus* ?), which

keep to rivers as a rule. Those which resort to marshes and tanks are not usually as large or as dangerous as those which infest tidal and brackish streams; nevertheless there is always some risk of meeting with an ugly customer, even in an inland lagoon.

Having expressed a belief in the existence of three varieties of crocodiles in Lower or Southern Bengal and in Orissa, I will briefly describe them as they have presented themselves to me, without touching upon their correct or scientific designations.

The largest and the most ferocious by far are the huge monsters to be found only at the mouths of the great rivers, and in the brackish waters of the countless creeks of the "Soonderbuns," where they are very abundant, and attain to the length of twenty-five feet, or even more; but the largest ever seen by me was twenty-four, and it looked, as it lay basking on the sloping river-bank, like an overturned boat of some size. Their distinguishing characteristics are the comparative shortness and great breadth of the skull, enormous bulk of body, and a marked preference for salt or brackish waters, from which they rarely ascend far up. This is a truly dreadful monster, a desperate man-hunter and man-eater, when it has acquired a taste for such prey, and its strength is so prodigious as to enable it to draw down even a bull buffalo if seized near deep water. The general colour of this great saurian is a dull greenish grey; the parts exposed to the bright glare of the sun glisten and look quite pale, while those in shadow appear almost black, or at least a dark slate colour. It has a habit, in common with the rest of the species, of lying asleep with jaws widely distended; but I cannot say that I have ever noticed any small birds serving it in the capacities of toothpick or tooth-brush. Silently gliding with the tide of some deep "Soonderbun" creek about sunset, I have seen this monster rise suddenly to the surface near my boat with a large fish across its jaws, which it has thrown up in the air, and caught again in its mouth as it fell head downwards, and then sink with a prodigious sweep of

its tail. About the same hour it may occasionally be heard to emit a sort of hoarse bellow, as if calling to some companion. Its extreme length has been already mentioned as twenty-five or twenty-six feet, but such dimensions are seldom attained, and the ordinary measurement of a large crocodile of this kind may be set down as eighteen to twenty only. It is commonly said to live to a very great age, rivalling those of the patriarchs of old, and to count more years than my modest pen cares to record.

I once was acquainted with an individual of this species or variety, which for two years was the terror of the boatmen and fishers who plied their callings on the waters haunted by him. I write of this fearful creature as being of the masculine gender, but failing to destroy him, notwithstanding my best efforts to do so, I judge of this only by his huge size and the great breadth of his head, and I calculate his length to have been twenty-two to twenty-four feet. His caution and cunning quite baffled me, and after destroying many men during two successive rainy seasons, he disappeared to be heard of no more. Mr. E. Chapman shot one of this kind—a notorious man-eater—near Chandballee, on the Damrah, and from its stomach took out pieces of gold, silver, copper, brass, and zinc, weighing in all twenty-nine or thirty pounds (I forget the exact weight), being the metals of which the ornaments of women were made, such being his most common victims, who had been carried off while bathing or drawing water at the river side.

Sometimes boatmen plying their paddles at the stern of their canoes are taken off, but such instances are rare. On one occasion a servant of mine narrowly escaped from the jaws of a particularly bold crocodile as he was stepping on board my boat, moored close to the bank of a very narrow tidal stream. On another occasion a boatman was seized close to me and dragged into deep water before a hand could be stretched out to help him; and although I followed quickly in a jolly-boat, with long poles to strike the reptile if I succeeded in overtaking him, and with a rifle in case he showed

his head or body above water, we could do nothing to save the unfortunate man. A distressing circumstance connected with this incident was the fact of the victim's hands appearing above water for some seconds, the fingers opening and closing as if in an appeal for help, his long hair becoming loosened, floating just below the surface, as he was carried away in an almost upright position, after being seized by the legs below the knees. Our utter inability to aid a fellow-creature in such dire distress was truly humiliating and painful.

The next in size and ferocity is the common crocodile of the country, known to the natives as the "mugger," the "koom-beer," or the "bocha," according to the locality. This reptile, growing to the length of sixteen to twenty feet, infests alike fresh and brackish waters, and is found high up the inland rivers, and even in those which flow among the hills of Cachar and Chittagong; it also enters marshes and large tanks in the rainy season, and wanders freely at night on land in search of new quarters. This variety is frequently to be seen in the deep weedy ditches of old fortresses, into which they have been introduced as guards.

The above are the two kinds described in books of natural history as common in Indian waters; but there is, according to my observations, a third and much smaller species, which, rarely exceeding eight or nine feet in length, infests weedy old tanks, deep ditches and marshes, and preys principally on fish, turtle, and vermin, varying its diet now and then by some incautious village dog, goat, or sheep which may fall within easy reach of its jaws. The natives give this variety the same names as to the last, which it resembles in many respects, though much smaller; but the skull is comparatively of less breadth, and it is not equally dreaded, bathers freely wading into the tanks, in which it is known to be in some numbers. I have shot as many as six or eight in the course of a morning among the weeds of deep ditches at the base of high embankments, such as are common in Midnapoor and Orissa; but I do not remember seeing any of this kind in Eastern Bengal.

The "gharial," or slender-headed Gangetic crocodile, does not affect brackish waters, and never descends so far as to come within the influence of the tides, so far as I have remarked; and although it attains to twenty feet in length, and even more, it is a harmless creature, attacking neither man nor cattle. I recall only one instance of its attacking man, and think it probable that it arose from a desire to defend its nest of eggs in the sand. The knobs upon the noses of the males being very much larger and more prominent than those on females, the sex is clearly indicated.

As a proof of the great difference in the disposition and general character of the broad and slender-headed species, in other words the "muggers" and the "gharials," it may be here remarked that if a stick or finger be held out to a young one—no matter how young or small—of the former, it will hiss and make a vicious snap, whereas the juvenile "gharial" will meekly accept the attention, and will suffer its nose to be tapped and its neck tickled without exhibiting anger or dislike.

To return to our ducks. I will venture to relate, at the risk of proving tiresome, the incidents of a day's duck-shooting on the "jheels," as an example of the sort of sport to be expected under favourable conditions.

The long chain of lagoons which lie parallel with the left bank of the Muddoomuttee or Balasur river, sometimes approaching it closely and sometimes receding a league or two, form together in the rainy season an immense expanse of sweet water of great depth, but contracting in the dry season, become wide and shallow "jheels," connected and linked together by narrow channels, by which small boats can traverse them from end to end of the entire chain. These lagoons were, without doubt, the bed of a great river, possibly one of the main arms of the Ganges itself, which, in the present day, flows downwards towards the sea, east of the station of Fareedpoor, thirty or forty miles away. A sparse population, mostly Hindoos of low castes, build their huts

on hummocks artificially raised slightly above the highest inundations; but when the latter are of extraordinary height, as will be the case once in every ten or a dozen years, the unhappy people are forced to take refuge on platforms built within their houses for storing grain and other things, or even on the roofs, till the waters subside a little in the course of a few days. Sometimes, however, the poor little hovels are themselves submerged or completely swept away by the deluge, and their owners are compelled to take to canoes, of which each family possesses one at least. Needless to say that these people are the poorest of the poor, living at the best of times a hand-to-mouth sort of existence, partly as husbandmen, partly as fishers, always sunk in the lowest depths of poverty and ignorance. Such being their condition, it is not surprising that these people have an evil reputation, and had, till the time of the formation of the present reformed police, the credit of being notorious river thieves and "dakoits," as you, my gentle reader and I should have, and justly too, under similar circumstances and temptations. Looking at the black and attenuated forms of these poor wretches, at their fleshless, knotted, and almost naked limbs, altogether so unlike the sturdy well-fed Moosulman peasantry of Eastern Bengal (probably the most prosperous in the whole world), one is disposed to conclude that a full "square" meal of nutritious food is unknown to them. The children appear to pick up a precarious subsistence much in the same fashion as do the few scraggy goats, pigeons, and stunted cattle owned by the plutocracy of the community. A coarse description of rice, a few sickly herbs and vegetables, and some mud-flavoured fish, form for them a diet, barely sufficient in quantity to keep body and soul together, till with a life far shorter than the span of three-score and ten their pains and troubles end. The women and children rarely leave their homes, but the men may be seen plying their canoes half the day, fishing or collecting the seeds of the water-lily, in a silent hopeless sort of way, as if such light labour were too much for their strength and energies; at other times they

must sleep, judging by the condition of their huts and little wildernesses of gardens.

On these great marshes whistling teal and many kinds of water birds breed in countless numbers; and when the waters commence to subside at the beginning of November, and the cool northern breezes assist the flight southwards of tens of thousands of wild-fowl from their Siberian homes, their entire surface become alive with rustling wings and quacking throats. By the middle of December these "jheels" are in their prime, affording excellent sport till March, when they become too shallow in many parts for even light canoes. Hitherto these favourite resorts of wild-fowl have not been much disturbed by the suppliers of the Calcutta market, but with the extension of the railroad eastward they will cease to be so, and that ere long.

With the intention of shooting over one of the best of these "jheels" named the "Moolna," C., E. and I anchored one day in January our large and comfortable "boleah" or state barge (as I suppose it would be called in England), a little above the mouth of a narrow creek, the outfall through which that "jheel" is drained into the broad Balasur, and thus we avoided the foul stench and the unwholesome influences of the water of the marsh. In addition to our large boat in which we slept anchored out in the stream, we had a second and smaller one which did duty as our kitchen; while a couple of tents pitched on the high bank of the river, afforded a pleasant retreat during the day, and became our dining room. A good deal of rain had fallen for three days, after an unusually sultry fortnight for that season of the year, rendering the weather cold and cloudy, and very suitable for sport.

After making all the arrangements necessary for an early start the next morning, we left camp about three in the afternoon in quest of snipe and plover, round a marshy plain not half a mile distant. We commenced badly by getting gradually waist-deep into weeds and muddy water, through which we forced our way with the utmost difficulty and

fatigue, having been enticed into the quagmire by a number of snipe which rose from the floating weeds. We bagged only a few and lost many more which we failed to retrieve from where they fell; however after extricating ourselves with no little labour we separated, C. and E. taking one direction and I the other, to meet again at our starting point, and on coming together again after a couple of hours plodding over the soft mud of the fields of green rice, we counted our combined bags, and found on our sticks twenty-six couple of snipe and a few golden plover.

By this time the sun had set, and as we trudged campwards, we heard overhead the swish, swish, of great flights of pochards, pintails, and blue-winged teal, which leaving the great "jheels" were making their way westward to the river. Changing snipe shot for No. 2 or 3 wire cartridges, we obtained, standing close to our tents, a few long shots each, and picked up three or four ducks, others fell into the river and cultivation on shore, and were lost in the increasing dusk of the evening. Our success was indifferent considering the great numbers of birds passing overhead, but the 12-bores (not choke) were unequal to the range, and the loud rush of the great flights through the air made them appear nearer to us than they really were, the increasing gloom of the moonless evening adding to the uncertainty of the distance. Thus tens of thousands continued to pass over our camp till past eight o'clock, but after six we failed to see them.

Day broke cold and misty next morning, and I rather opine that we should have liked an hour or two more under the blankets than could be allowed with such a day as that chalked out for us. Accordingly we had taken our coffee and toast by sunrise, and shortly afterwards were seated each in his "dinghee," with guns and ammunition and a servant behind. Two other canoes followed us, one with a "khidmatgar," or table attendant, in charge of a substantial breakfast and sundry other creature comforts, the other as a tender to look for and pick up crippled birds. The tide being favourable, we paddled rapidly up the creek for three miles;

being then mastered by the set of the current from the "jheel," we poled slowly up a mile or two more before reaching our shooting water. During our progress many flights of ducks and teal passed overhead eastward, all too high for even my duck-gun; but numerous water birds such as whimbrel, godwits, ibis, goose-teal, red-shanks, sandpipers, plover, snipe, and others rose on both sides, offering tempting shots, particularly the last named, fine fat birds, which flushed within twenty yards out of the rice-fields bordering the creek, settled again within as many more. To C., an old hand, this was tantalising no doubt, whereas to E., a "new chum," it looked like throwing away the precious gifts of Providence; nevertheless we were bound to refrain from firing at such game, if we desired to make a good bag of the special objects of our pursuit.

After four miles had been covered, we entered the great lagoon itself, still poling along a clear water-way, bordered by inundated fields of rice and grasses, in which the blue-winged teal fed in great numbers, and of them we secured six or eight couple in a few shots before commencing the real work of the day. The lake now spread out right and left as far as we could see, and a low line of scraggy trees distant four or five miles, marked the eastern shore. Wherever there was open water it was covered with gadwals, pochards, and teal, while the water cabbages and lilies concealed as many more, besides pintails, whistling teal, coots, and water-hens innumerable.

C. and E. were armed with ordinary 12-bore double guns, but I had in addition that day a single-barrelled duck-gun of 8-bore, which requires to be known thoroughly to be appreciated. Of a comic turn of character, and of a somewhat ill-regulated mind, this weapon will sometimes refuse to bring down the nearest birds of a great flock, but will drop those beyond a hundred and twenty or thirty yards off. With the necessary elevation, it will kill with loose shot at over a hundred yards, and with wire cartridges twenty yards farther.

Separating at this point, it was agreed to meet again about noon on the north side of the "jheel," when the provision tender, which was to follow me, should hoist a flag on a pole, and give the signal for breakfast.

Soon afterwards the firing grew brisk, so that not a moment passed without great numbers of birds passing over or around us, singly and in great clouds, but almost always beyond range, even of the duck-gun; nor did the sport become very good till we were some distance apart, when I began to pick up rapidly gadwals, red-crested pochards, white-eyes and blue-winged teal; now by shots at single birds, and then at flocks, the duck-gun making clear lanes through the latter as the ducks rose in clouds before me at long range; and thus the game went merrily on for two hours, about which time I came to some islets covered with tall grasses and masses of floating weeds, from which plump snipe sprang up within a dozen paces, tempting me to shoot them but in vain, so long as the more coveted game lay before me on the clear water in thousands, giving very long shots indeed, and oftentimes getting off with smaller loss than I could understand; but after one such with the long gun, I gathered in a harvest of fully a dozen gadwals and pochards, besides crippling others which I failed to retrieve among weeds, the wire cartridge with No. 2 shot doing yeoman's service at a hundred yards and over.

E. now rejoined me, not over-elated with his success, having secured a very modest bag consisting mostly of teal, the ducks proving too coy and wary for him; but to make up for any deficiency of that sort he brought a wonderful story of an adventure he had had with a rhinoceros!

It appeared that as he was silently advancing through some tall grass to get a long shot at pochards lying in open water, he suddenly espied, cautiously nearing his canoe, the black head of a rhino, with its entire body submerged, its horned snout rising and falling as it fed on the tops of the water grasses, and the points of its ears clearly visible behind the horn. E., now out for his first day's sport since arrival in the country, was equal to the momentous occasion, and rapidly

exchanging his shot for ball cartridges, with which he was well supplied, he awaited the charge of the huge beast, resolved not to fire till he could do so very effectually at close quarters. The creature continued to move forward, either ignorant of the vicinity of the canoe and its occupants, or fancying itself undetected, determined to finish the affair off-hand by a sudden and short rush. The position was becoming a critical one; the boatmen crouching at the stern of the boat were eagerly and anxiously watching E.'s movements, which were to them quite incomprehensible; and E. himself was prepared to sell his life dearly. The moment was a trying one indeed. Suddenly the black head of the crafty monster was jerked upwards with an impatient toss; the blunt horn on its nose flew up, and separating from the head, appeared in the form of an impudent little "king-crow" (*Dicrurus macrocerus*); the ears were transformed into a pair of horns; and the rhinoceros turned into a black village bull! Thus all ended happily; the bull continued to graze, the "king-crow" after snapping up an insect, returned to a seat on his back, and lastly the pochards, whose nerves had proved unequal to the occasion, flew away to a less exciting situation.

It now being noon, breakfast was signalled (a white napkin on a fore-pole), a shot was fired to leeward (at a crane), the four vessels were safely anchored in two feet of water, with springs on the cables (tow-ropes), and all made snug alow and aloft. C., who was diligently firing away about a mile off, seeing the signal, hastened to obey it, fearful of being too late to secure his fair share in a meal, at which he could play a no mean part, and in a quarter of an hour grappled with the commissariat tender, bringing with him a great bag, made up of many sorts of ducks and teal, regarding which he said but little for the space of half an hour, having urgent business to transact within a limited time.

After resting for an hour and a-half, during which time our attendants refreshed themselves with parched grain and a "chillum," we made for some hummocks, upon which stood half a dozen huts, unprotected from the sun and storms,

except by a scanty growth of a few bushes and tall castor-oil plants. One single cotton-tree, white with the droppings of fishing-hawks and eagles, marked the spot from a distance, and stretched out its poor torn and twisted arms in perpetual signals of distress. After conversing a little while with the half-starved fishers, and acting upon their advice, we pushed past the hummocks into a wide and weedy morass beyond, leaving behind us as many whistling-teal, coots, and cranes as would provide them all, small and great, with at least two good meals of meat each that and the next day.

Till past three o'clock we plied our guns till the barrels became too hot to touch without being wetted, securing a great number of birds, mostly gadwals and blue-winged teal; and then turning our faces homewards, we worked our way through gigantic water-lilies in a line abreast of each other, but half a mile apart, adding to our bag black and purple coots, water-cock, large and small whistling-teal for our servants and others, besides pochards and gadwals, but we got no more pintails that day.

About sunset we met again at the fishermen's station at the head of the creek flowing into the river, and here resting awhile to light cheroots and count the spoil, we resumed our paddles, and obtaining some pretty sport with blue-winged teal, which rose singly and in small flocks from their feeding-grounds in the wet rice-fields on both sides, we regained our camp before dark, very well satisfied with our success, our bag consisting of a hundred and fourteen couple of pintails, gadwals, pochards (red-crested, red-headed, and white-eyed), blue-winged teal, and a few others, besides half as many more whistling and goose-teal, coots, water-cocks, herons, cranes, storks, godwits, plover, and snipe, a heavy and mixed bag, but not a bit more so than the demand, for reserving a score of the choicest birds for our own use, the rest barely sufficed to satisfy the wants of the many to whom a meal of meat was a rarity, and who flocked round us on our return to camp in crowds from the bazaar and village adjacent.

The great fishing eagles had been a sore nuisance all day.

Following us incessantly in our movements, they robbed us of many crippled birds, and by hovering over reposing ducks and alarming them, they spoilt many a shot. The myriads of whistling-teal were also most aggravating, as, ever on the wing, their ceaseless cries kept all other birds in a state of unrest. Lastly, the bald-coots proved as obnoxious as usual, interposing between us and the nobler birds we were cautiously approaching, and startling them before we came within range; but with these annoyances the wild-fowl shooter in Bengal must always put up.





CHAPTER XVIII.

Other Game—The Wild Elephant—The Gour, Gayal, Mithan, or Gourighai—The Axis, or Spotted Deer—The Hog Deer—The Barking Deer—The Bāra-singha, or Marsh Deer—The Sambur—The Nilghau—The Gazelle—The Four-horned Antelope—The Black Buck—The Wolf and the Hyena—The Wild Dog—The Pigmy Hog—Hares.

I HAVE endeavoured to give, in the foregoing pages, some idea of the sport to be had at the present day in the Lower Provinces; and I might very well conclude now, for there is, in fact, little more to be said on that subject. In following up large game, the sportsman will, no doubt, meet with three or four species of deer on many occasions, and possibly on rare ones the elephant and the gour may be encountered in the most remote forests, where the tiger and the buffalo will not be sought.

The elephant is now very properly strictly protected, its destruction being forbidden under heavy pecuniary penalties, always excepting cases in which it becomes dangerous and injurious to human life and property. This most useful animal still roams in considerable herds through the wilderness between Sylhet and Chittagong, over the Hill Tracts and the Garo country, in many parts of Assam and the tributary mehals of Orissa, and lastly, over the foot-hills and the Terai of the Himalayas. Small herds are sometimes to be found on the wooded hills of Manbhoom and the Santhal Pergunnahs, and at the present moment two or three individuals are doing some mischief in the last-named district. Four or five years ago

a small herd wandered as far north as Hazaribagh, and in 1884 I saw the spoor of two or three enterprising animals, which, leaving their homes in the forests and uplands on the borders of Manbhoom and Singbhoom, had boldly traversed the thickly-peopled district of Bankoorah, as far north as Sonamoakhee, close to the banks of the Damooda river, and then finding themselves quite out of place in that well-cultivated neighbourhood, they had returned on their tracks and disappeared without doing more mischief than clearing off some fields of grain and frightening the owners.

The gour, or Indian bison as it is commonly called, though not a bison at all, has, I think, become lately less rare in the southern parts of Chota Nagpoor than it has been for many years, due, it may be presumed, to the growing paucity of European sportsmen since the days of the famous "Junglee" (Colonel Ousely), whose exploits used to form not the least interesting articles of the old yellow-covered "Sporting Review" of thirty years ago.

In the early years of the present century this noble beast, probably the very first of all game animals, and as superior to the American bison as the tiger is to the jaguar, inhabited in some numbers the forest-clad uplands as far east even as Bankoorah, as well as the steep sides of Parasnath itself; but now its eastern range is restricted to the Dalma hill, which rises to an altitude of nearly two thousand feet, forming the most noticeable feature of the southern parts of Manbhoom, and said to be the permanent home of a few of these lords of the woods. The gour still wanders freely through the extensive forests of the tributary mehals, which, with comparatively insignificant breaks, stretch away westwards to the Central Province; but it has long ago deserted the Kymore range, and the wooded banks of the upper Sone river and its tributaries. I am told that it is common on the lofty plateaux of Sirgooja, but of that I cannot speak from personal experience.

The gayal, the mithan, and the gouri-ghai of Assam,

Chittagong, and the Himalayan slopes is, to my thinking, the same grand beast as the last, differing in some minor points, as it may reasonably be expected to do, under dissimilar conditions as to soil, climate, and food. In form, colour, and habits, they are exactly the same, but the native of Central and Western India is somewhat superior in height and bulk. Naturalists pretend to the discovery of a marked dissimilarity in the frontal bones of the two, but probably not so great as that in the skulls of Caucasians and Mongolians, let alone that of negroes. Be the learned in such niceties right or wrong, to the sportsman the animals are practically identical as regards disposition and habits. Unlike the buffalo, this noble beast is extremely shy and intolerant of the vicinity of man; but unless goaded to anger by wounds, or disabled beyond its powers of flight, it is not to be compared for ferocity and fearlessness with the former.

From its great scarcity the gour or gayal is not much sought in the Lower Provinces, its pursuit demanding more time, toil, and patience than will be devoted to a very uncertain end; but to the enthusiastic Nimrod, with ample leisure and a good stock of temper and endurance, it presents the noblest object on which the sight of his trusty rifle can be brought to bear.

The destruction of deer without regard to age, sex, or season, has completely cleared the greatest portion of the Lower Provinces of this beautiful animal, which otherwise might still be providing an occasional meal of meat to thousands who now never taste it, and would also supply food to tigers and panthers which, in their absence, prey upon the domestic flocks and herds. The herds of axis, which used to be found all over the country (trans-Megna excepted) wherever trees or bushes afforded them shelter from the noon-tide sun, must now be sought in the "Soonderbuns;" there are a few still in the Gya and Hazaribagh districts, along the sea coast of Orissa, and among the hills in the interior, but in no great numbers; lastly, one or two small herds may

survive in the heaviest jungles of Rajshye and Maldah. The days are however past when the sportsman, accompanied by one or two attendants, could be certain of half a dozen shots at least during a morning's stalk, or if lucky return to camp with three or four goodly stags. I have myself brought in as many as ten shot before noon.

If the "para" or hog-deer be fairly treated, they multiply rapidly, being a hardy race, but they are neither as large nor as beautiful as the spotted deer; moreover, living as they do, by choice upon grass or reed-covered plains, they do not give the stalker as good sport as the other, but when plentiful afford excellent shooting from the howdah, a sport not to be despised, as no animal is more difficult to bring down than a hog-deer rushing rapidly through reeds and tall grass, with its head held low and its body crouching close to the ground, according to its habit. This animal frequents much the same description of coverts as the wild hog, and sometimes affords a good run to the hog-hunter with or without greyhounds.

Wherever a rough low-lying plain covered with coarse grass, thorny bushes, or stiff reeds, is seen bordering a great river, skirting the base of hills, or lying snug and dank between deep woods, there may the hog-deer be found consorting with the wild boar and the "kya" partridge; and unless thinned greatly by the tiger or panther, increasing and multiplying exceedingly. These deer used literally to swarm upon the "churs" of the Megna and the Brahmapootra, and are still plentiful in parts of Mymensingh, Maldah, Dinagepoor, and Purneah; more particularly on both sides of the river Koosee in the last-named district.

The bright orange-coated "kākar" or barking-deer is rather smaller but far prettier than the last, and is essentially a habitant of hills and forests; unlike the deer tribe in general it does not collect together in herds, but prefers small parties, or more commonly the company only of its mate. A very few are left now in the Lower Provinces, but it will be put up occasionally when tree coverts on hills or uplands are

beaten for bears, pea and jungle-fowl in Orissa and Chota Nagpoor.

In my own estimation the "bāra-singha" is the noblest deer of the country. Almost rivalling in size the "sambur," it surpasses the latter in beauty of form and colour, and nearly matches the axis, that Adonis of the woods, in grace and general comeliness, while it exceeds it in strength, height, and bulk. The antlers of a full-grown stag have ordinarily twelve tines (whence it takes its name in Hindostanee), and these are sometimes of considerable breadth and stoutness, nor is it uncommon to find them with fourteen, while I have seen some of even sixteen. This fine deer consorts in herds of ten to thirty, forty, or even more, and is to be found on extensive open grass plains lying around marshes and lakes, it being fond of the vicinity of water, from which characteristic it is commonly known in Bengal as the marsh-deer. I have seen as many as fifty or sixty grazing together in the glades between woods growing on the grassy slopes at the foot of the Himalayas. It is very abundant in Assam, where it attains to a great size, and it used to be numerous in Cachar and Sylhet, close to Silchar in the former, and especially in the "Hakkalooke" plains in the latter district, but is found there no longer, and is fast disappearing from Bengal, there being but a few left in Julpigoree, Maldah, Dinagepoor, and the "Soonderbuns." I have never met with one of them in the last-named tract, but am informed by competent authorities that it is to be found in some open spaces and swamps in the midst of those gloomy forests, associating with wild buffaloes and hogs.

The great *Rusa* stag or "sambur" of the Lower Provinces is not the noble creature of Central India and the Blue Mountains of the Madras Presidency, and although plentiful in the Chittagong hill tracts, some parts of Orissa and Chota Nagpoor, or Parasnath, and all along the base of the Himalayas, as well as on the Kusia and Jyntea range, it rarely carries a head of remarkable size and beauty. This fine deer associates in parties of ten or a dozen, preferring the woods

and grassy glades of mountain tops and slopes to low-lying jungles, descending to salt-licks and favourite feeding grounds at night, to return before sunrise to harbour during the day in the higher coverts. The Kymore hills still contain a few small herds, and those of the tributary mehals more, and of a finer breed than those of the eastern frontier and Tipperah.

The "nil-ghau," the gazelle, and the four-horned antelope may still be met with in the western districts, but they are by no means numerous or made the objects of special pursuit; in fact, it goes against one's heart to fire at these fast disappearing creatures.

There remains to be mentioned only the black buck, which has not yet become quite extinct in these Provinces, as it inevitably will be in a very few more years. I have seen as many as three hundred together in Pooree, and have tried them with rifle, horse, and greyhounds on the sandy dunes of that district, the two last failing to bring them to bay. On a certain occasion in particular, accompanied by one of my brothers, both of us riding under eleven stone, and both mounted on fast horses in good condition, we did all we could to circumvent and ride down some bucks with the aid of two couples of greyhounds, but all in vain. Separating and dividing the hounds, we took up positions nearly opposite each other, and as soon as the antelopes commenced to make off, one of us would take up the chase, and sticking to the best buck of the flock, would lay into him at racing pace, the other with his hounds taking up the running as the antelope neared him; and thus the game went on all the morning till noon, by which time we were compelled to confess ourselves vanquished after several ineffectual chases. Always at first the game seemed to be in our favour, the greyhounds running up hand over hand, but when our hopes were at the highest, we ceased to gain upon our quarry, and then gradually and surely fell back, till with blown horses and hounds, we pulled up dead beat, the buck vanishing beyond some sand hillock, not, however, without his powers having been stretched to their

utmost. In these chases our hounds suffered more than our horses, their first sustained rushes seeming to cause them great distress, for the bucks invariably had a long start, no matter how cautiously we made the stalk.

Once only have I succeeded in laying my horse fairly alongside a beaten buck, and that was in the south of the Midnapoor district, not far from Jellaisar, on an excessively hot day in April, when the hot winds had scorched the country dry to nearly spontaneous combustion point. I was riding to camp about eleven in the forenoon, mounted on "Comet," a famous Arab pig-sticker, nearly fifteen hands high, and in racing condition; a gallant horse, as fleet as he was staunch, high-hearted, active, and intelligent. On passing over a broad expanse of sun-dried rice-fields, divided by low walls of twelve to twenty inches in height, I came suddenly upon half-a-dozen antelope reposing in the shade of some thorny bushes, out of which they sprang as I approached them at a canter, and broke away with high bounds. Selecting the only buck, I lay into him with a cheery tally-ho, and we set to for about three miles, when he seemed to be coming back to me, making short turns to the right and left. Another mile and he was almost under my off stirrup, so that, had I been armed with a hog-spear, I could have rolled him over as dead as Julius Cæsar, but holding only a riding-switch in my hand, I could do no more than ride the poor beast till his heart broke, possibly seriously injuring my gallant steed in the attempt; accordingly I pulled up the latter, and allowed the former to stagger away sorely distressed. This buck was of a rusty black colour, and, I take it, past his prime. The ground was, as I have observed, as hard as rock, uneven, and intersected by many low ridges, but in no way, as I understand it, more favourable to the horse than to the buck. Be that as it may, the antelope was fairly beaten, and the horse none the worse for the run.

In Pooree, the soil, which was pure sand, lightly covered here and there by a crisp sappy weed on which the antelope browse, was more favourable for the buck than for the horse,

which last, with eleven stone up, must have sunk a little into the sand, while the other hardly broke the crust; but then, was it unfavourable to the greyhounds? I think it was not, and that they were fairly outpaced and beaten, though rather above the average in wind and stoutness. Never having seen the same trial made with other men's horses and greyhounds, I feel incapable of arriving at any other satisfactory conclusion than that my own and my brother's were signally vanquished.

The Brahmapootra and the Megna form the eastern limit of the range of the antelope, as well as of the spotted deer, the wolf, and the hyena. The first has passed eastward up to Kishnaghur and the plains between the "Terai" and the northern banks of the first-named river, as far as the Goalpara district, the axis having been seen as far east as Durrang; but though extremely abundant up to the Megna, along the sea-board, the latter has not crossed it, nor have I ever seen it or heard of it east of that river. The wolf and hyena have not penetrated so far to the eastward, the country beyond the Hooghly in that direction appearing unsuited to their habits and tastes. The black buck stalker may, if persevering and a good shot, obtain a shot or two in the morning in Gya and Shahabad, but his sport will appear exceedingly poor and unsatisfactory if he have had previous experience in the Upper and Western Provinces.

The wild dog is by no means rare in Chota Nagpoor, and is found in Assam also. Unless I am much mistaken, a smaller variety than that so common in Central India has been encountered by me in the Sibsagar district in Assam. A pack or two range Parasnath and the adjacent hills and forests, and run down the "sambur" in those parts. Natives insist on the truth of the statement that a pack of these wild hounds will attack, and even destroy the tiger; and the testimony of several authors of works on Indian sport support the assertions of the native "Shikarees." Although I am unable from personal experience to maintain or contradict the truth of this extraordinary assertion, it appears to me

more than probable that if a pack of these animals come upon the carcase of a deer slain by a tiger, it will endeavour to obtain possession of the prey of the royal beast by a joint onslaught upon him if urged thereto by extreme hunger, or at least it will drive him away by persistent and well-sustained bayings and skirmishing attacks. Should a tiger attempt to deprive a successful pack of its lawful prize, I feel sure he would have to make a fight to attain his object, and might under such circumstances succumb to the anger and outraged feelings of numbers. Having witnessed the retreat of a tiger before the pertinacious worrying of my own "bobbery-pack," I am less incredulous of the native assertions than otherwise I might be; but if the brindled tyrant is ever destroyed by such comparatively insignificant foes, the latter must pay dearly for the victory, for at every stroke dealt by the former, one at least must bite the dust, and if even thirty or forty fall upon him at once, the slaughter among them must be very great.

A small creature, which has only of late years become generally known, is the pigmy hog of the "Terai," and, I take it, identical with the peccary of Central America, or at least closely allied to it. It is rarely met with by shooting parties, and I have myself seen but one in the wild state, and that was in beating for rhinoceros and gayal with a line of elephants along the borders of woods in the "Terai," close to the base of the Himalayan foot-hills on the extreme northern frontier of Goalpara, or peradventure even a little beyond it in Bhootea territory. It cannot be properly designated a game animal, except by those who, having tasted its flesh with approval, choose so to dignify it.

The two hares of Bengal, the common and the hispid, call for no particular remarks. But for the unlimited numbers of beasts and reptiles which prey upon them, the former would afford good sport in most districts, both in coursing and shooting, as they actually do in some few; but their numbers being kept down by their countless enemies, they are never plentiful anywhere in Bengal. The other is a

strange, dowdy little creature, in form resembling more the wild rabbit than the hare, and it is found only in the north of Dacca, through the Muddoopoor jungles, up into Assam and the "Terai." It has a bristly coat, short fore-legs, small ears like those of rats, a thick dumpy body, and is of retiring habits; lastly, it is unfit for the table, and is not worth shooting, except as a curiosity; nor does it give greyhounds the chance of a course, sticking as it does to thick coverts.





CHAPTER XIX.

Wrinkles—Books on Indian Sport—Guns and Rifles—Batteries for Big and Small Game—Gunmakers and Prices—Clothing—Necessary Articles for Shooting from Howdahs—"Resources of the Country" not to be depended upon for Camp Life—Servants—Anglo-Indian Hospitality—Facilities for Travelling in the Interior—Camp Requisites—Treatment of Wounds—Tents and Camping—Sanitary Precautions—Practice in Firing—Movements of Animals in High Grass and other Covert—Care of Arms—Camp Hours—Small Parties preferable to Large Ones—Tents—Carriage—Camp Furniture—Tracking—Procuring Information of Game—Dealing and Intercourse with Natives—Thieves and Thieving—Treatment of "Mahouts"—Cartridges—Gunpowder—Shells.

THE game to be found in Bengal having been discussed, as well as the various ways it may be sought and brought to bag, I will now venture to offer a few suggestions on the general outfit of the sportsman who has the inclination and the leisure to devote himself to such sport as the country presents, subject, of course, to his individual fancies and predilections.

Guns and rifles are of necessity the first consideration, and they, too, must be selected according to the game to be followed, and the pecuniary means of each sportsman; but before entering upon the interesting subject of batteries, it may be well to name a few books, the perusal of which will prove useful to him whose ambition, soaring above mere slaughter, aims at an intimate acquaintance with the habits, dispositions, and resorts of the game he pursues.

I name with some diffidence a few among many excellent works, alike instructive and entertaining. It may be safely

asserted, I think, that of all books on Indian sport, none has caught the fancy and excited the imagination of young Nimrods in an equal degree with that charming romance of sport, "The Old Forest Ranger;" by all means, then, let it be read for its vivid descriptions of camp life, and its stirring narratives of hairbreadth escapes and daring exploits. The perusal of this book has, no doubt, made a man of many a "muff," by inciting him to emulate the deeds it records so clearly, and by rousing an ambition to take part in them; but the young reader must remember that big game is not now as abundant as in the days when Major Walter Campbell stalked the "Neilgherries," rifle on shoulder; and Mansfields and Kate Lorrimers are at present far from plentiful.

Another work, constructed, as it seems, on the model of the above, is Mr. Sterndale's "Seonee; or Camp Life on the Sutpura Range," a comparatively modern publication (1877), describing "sporting adventures in a connected narrative, mingled with very correct descriptions of the game encountered by the heroes of the tale.

Captain Baldwin's "Large and Small Game of Bengal" (1876) may be consulted for its accuracy of description and careful observations. It is written in a clear and concise style.

Captain Rice's "Tiger-shooting in India" (1857) must not, of course, be overlooked, although the gallant author describes such sport as will not be found in Bengal any more than will tigers and tigresses of such grand proportions as fell to his rifle; nevertheless it is a book which every tyro may study with advantage as a trustworthy record of sport, followed in the most manly and exciting style.

Major H. Shakespear's "The Wild Sports of India" (1862) may likewise be read with both pleasure and profit; as also Colonel Gordon Cumming's "Wild Men and Wild Beasts" (1871), an entertaining and instructive record of actual sporting adventures, to which may be added Mr. Sanderson's fourteen years' experiences among Indian big game.

Among my sporting books is a little one of 230 pages, entitled "The Spear and the Rifle, or Recollections of Sport in India, by an old Shikaree," who is identical, we may presume, with the "Old Shekarry," the late Major Leveson. The date of publication is omitted on the title-page and in the preface of my copy, but from certain names mentioned therein and other indications, it appears to relate events which are supposed to have occurred between 1830 and 1840 or thereabouts, strung together in connected sequence; but there are grounds for the belief that it describes exploits and experiences of various periods of a life of adventure, and is not to be mistaken for an exact narrative of events in close connection. However that may be, this little book is written in a lively and entertaining style, and it is well worth perusal if it can be procured.

For authorities on natural history, the following authors may be consulted, viz.: Jerdon, Sterndale ("Mammalia of India"), and Hume and Marshall on the birds of India. Messrs. Thaker, Spink, & Co., of Calcutta, have recently (1885) published "Useful Hints to Young Shikaris on the Gun and Rifle, by the Little Old Bear," a handbook which can be recommended to those for whom it is designed.

The next subject for consideration is the important one of arms. Were I asked by a young sportsman coming out to this country what kind of a gun he ought to buy, my reply would be a double-barrel central fire 12-bore, made half a pound heavier than ordinary, so as to be better adapted to ball-shooting, and to charges of three and a quarter to three and a half drams of powder for duck-shooting. If my questioner added that he could afford a rifle too, I would suggest to him a double-barrel central fire 12-bore, capable of "eating," as native "shikarees" say, four and a half drams of powder, and sighted up to three hundred yards, though less by fifty or a hundred will suffice for general purposes. With these two a man can meet on favourable terms almost any animal in India, and will be efficiently armed for stalking and howdah shooting anything

less vast and tough than the elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, and "gour." If a .500 Express can be added, so much the better; but if a choice must be made between the two—and the largest game may fall in his way occasionally—the purchaser should give preference to the former rifle. Whether "Express" or other, the rifle should be built with a pistol grip, with the best of locks, and as little engraving and ornamentation as he can in his heart put up with in his pet weapons, remembering that the additional £5 or £10 spent on such non-essentials will not give better shooting, and will add to the trouble of cleaning and polishing. With only one double smooth-bore, choke or semi-choke barrels should be eschewed, as articles of luxury reserved for those who can afford large batteries.

Having remarked that a man armed with a brace of double 12-gauge sister gun and rifle, in addition to a .500 double "Express," is equal to almost every emergency, I will jot down what appear to me more complete armaments for Bengal:—

NO. 1.—LIGHT BATTERY.

- 1 D. B. C. F. 12-gauge rifle.
- 1 D. B. C. F. .500 Express rifle.
- 1 D. B. C. F. 12-gauge gun (cylindrical).
- 1 D. B. C. F. 10 or 8-gauge, duck-gun (choke).

NO. 2.—HEAVY BATTERY.

Add to the above—

- 1 D. B. C. F. 10 or 8-gauge rifle.
- 1 D. B. C. F. .577 Express rifle.
- 1 D. B. C. F. 16-gauge gun (cylindrical) for snipe and quail-shooting, as well as small deer off elephants.

NO. 3.—FANCY BATTERY.

Add to the two last—

- 1 D. B. C. F. 12-gauge gun of ordinary weight, choke or cylindrical according to fancy.

1 D. B. C. F. .400 or .450 Express rifle; afterwards 20-bore guns, small-bore Expresses, rook and magazine rifles, D. B.

4-gauge guns or rifles, and other pop-guns and field-pieces may be superadded *ad lib.*, according to length and depth of purse.

I regard No. 2 battery as perfect and equal to every emergency in a sportsman's career in Bengal. It will cost from £250 to £300, if bought of makers whose prices are the highest, according to quality, fittings, and ornamentation; and from £200 to £225, if supplied by those whose haste to become rich is more moderate. So far as actual shooting is concerned there will be but little difference, perhaps none at all; but in the more high-priced weapons there will be a certain feel, a finer finish, and a general look of superficial superiority which may be wanting, or if present less noticeable, in the others. The most costly guns and rifles will also wear better, and last longer in thoroughly good condition—I do not allude to fancy goods at £60 to £100 each, but to £35 to £45 articles—than cheaper ones; but then the former are hard to be disposed of at even half the prices paid for them when new, whereas a good £20 gun, or an equally good £30 rifle, will always fetch Rs. 150 and Rs. 200 if in fair condition.

I have recently seen many plain and strong, which cost from £6 to £12 only, and shot very well too; but their looks are generally harsh and inferior, and I believe they show “wear and tear” rather early in use, unlike some which look as well and shoot as accurately after twenty years' use as when first purchased. I have a “Joe Manton” which has been used by three generations for nearly seventy years, of which the barrels appear to be as good as ever. This old veteran started in life as a flint fire-lock, and was converted, after much discussion on the merits of the two systems, as well as some hesitation on the part of its owner, into a percussion, about the year 1826; its price when quite new was £50. I have tried sometimes to calculate the probable numbers of furred and feathered game the old patriarch has brought down, but the figure is too great to be lightly set down before those who know it not.

Hammerless guns and rifles do not make rapid advance

in India ; nor are magazine arms in great use, owing probably to certain imperfections which have to be corrected ; which being done they should prove the very best for hunting on horseback buffalo and other animals. Writing as I do for sportsmen and not "muffs," I need not warn them against having their first gun, on coming out, with one barrel choke and the other cylinder, "so as to be prepared for either a partridge or a panther, Sir," such guns being likely to lead to the escape of the bird, and to a probable mauling by the beast.

There is one thing young purchasers are apt to overlook, and that is the proper fit of the guns to their shoulders and length of arms ; but it is one of the utmost importance, and on it depends good shooting. It is unreasonable to expect a gun made for a tall thin man to fit a short stout one. You who are particular about the fit of your coats, should be quite as particular as to the fit of your guns.

As to makers, whose names now are legion and merits undeniable, what can be said in such an "embarras de richesse." If you can afford that luxury, by all means get your guns from Purdey, Lancaster, Alexander Henry and others, who make you pay £10 or £20 for the honour of using their manufactures, which will prove perfection in almost all instances, but will not sell for half their cost when you wish to dispose of them. Westley-Richards, Greener, Lang, Holland, and others of their class, will provide you with quite as serviceable arms for much less, which will realise almost as much as the others when sold again. I recommend those to whom a £10 note is a matter for consideration, the second in preference to the first quality as advertised by all really good makers, because the additional greater original price paid for the former, will not be taken into account by the purchaser of the second-hand article. As every man has his fancy, based on reason or folly, so of course have I ; and accordingly I cast my vote for Alexander Henry of Edinburgh, for the most expensive works of art turned out of gun factories, and for Westley-Richards for the stronger

and less costly. I have a rifle made for me by the last-named famous firm which has been in use thirty years, and is as good as it ever was, and a better no man ever had. It cost £55, but being a muzzle-loader (10-bore polygroove), I suppose no one would give Rs. 250 for it now; that is about a third of the original price at the current rate of exchange.

Some men when out stalking are addicted to hanging on their belts revolvers and huge hunting knives, which rarely come into use for defence, and are rather useless burdens than necessary articles of equipment. A knife of moderate length which will readily take a keen edge on a hone, will always prove handy to the sportsman, whose second gun-bearer should carry a bill-hook or a Nepalese knife ("kookree"), the latter for choice. Even in the howdah these last are indispensable, as branches of trees, creepers, and canes have often to be cut and cleared away in forcing a passage through dense and tangled covert. As a rule the steel of which English knives and spear-heads are made is too hard, and difficult to sharpen sufficiently. A pair of English butchers' knives, kept clean and keen, should also be provided for skinning.

In howdah shooting a thick rug or two ought to be carried, to afford a defence against wild bees, which will now and then scatter a line of elephants and send them flying across the open; add a "serai" or earthen pitcher of water, a few biscuits, cheroots, matches, a flask of whisky or brandy, a binocular, and a stout umbrella, to complete the equipment. A basket or two of substantial refreshments will always accompany the party, fastened securely on the pad of a steady elephant, with a table servant clinging on monkey-fashion to his precious charge; but it is absolutely necessary that the occupant of each howdah should be independently provided with some refreshments of his own, in case of separation or other accident. An umbrella may sound a queer adjunct, nevertheless it is not to be omitted, because considerable distances have frequently to be traversed between jungles, or in returning to camp in a scorching hot sun. In the wet season, or when rain may be expected, a blanket poncho and a water-

proof sheet about nine feet by six, and large enough to cover the howdah, its occupants, and the guns, will be found most useful and comfortable.

The alternations of temperature within a few hours being often very great, suitable clothing for both heat and cold must always be provided. I have known the thermometer in the cold season to stand at 34° at daybreak, and at 80° nine hours afterwards in a tent; and in the hot season it will fall from 100° to 68° in the course of an hour or two after a nor'-wester and a hailstorm. It is to be observed that the air at 40° or 50° in Bengal *seems* colder than the same would do in England at 30° ; firstly because the cold is damp and raw, and the skin, from the tenderness arising from excessive perspiration for long periods, becomes acutely susceptible to cold and chilly air; and, secondly, because the surroundings and clothing are all better adapted to meet heat rather than cold. At all times, then, a merino undervest should be worn, and over it such upper clothing as the variations of temperature naturally suggest.

When the air is very dry in the hottest season of the year, one may sleep under an outer fly of a tent without much risk to health, but even then prudence will suggest a mosquito-net over the bed to intercept the moisture of the air just before and after dawn. In Eastern and Northern Bengal the night air is always more or less loaded with damp, and in the southern tracts, not far from the coast, it is so in an excessive degree. When lying out in malarious localities a great wood fire kept up all night will insure immunity within a circle of heated air, say ten yards from the centre.

Given a fairly sound constitution, the key-note for health is moderation in all things. Whether journeying by land or by water, the traveller who relies "upon the resources of the country" will run little risk of endangering his health by an over rich diet, and his drink will be poor thin milk and indifferent water, filtered once or oftener. Unless he provides himself with a store of tinned meats, soups, jams, fish, patés, and biscuits, in addition to tea, coffee, wine, beer, liqueurs,

and spirits, his food will consist of lean and tough fowls and ducks, and flabby, tasteless fish, with a kid or lamb for high days and holidays when in luck. Bread is not procurable in the interior, and butter must be made, since it is not to be bought, "ghee" being the native substitute for the latter, and hand-bread (*chapātee*) for the former. A supply of biscuits and rusks should never be omitted. Thus the inexperienced traveller will not be tempted to excesses of the table; but, on the other hand, he will find the camp and the boat of the old Anglo-Indian, who does not rely on the country's resources abundantly supplied with all necessities, as well as many delicacies.

Servants in this country are not luxuries but necessities, and in the mass are now careless, ignorant, dirty, and dishonest, except in large and well-ordered establishments. They have greatly deteriorated of late years, being drawn from a lower stratum of the native community, quite unlike the clean, smart, respectful, and respectable domestics of old. The worst specimens of the class will be found at the Presidencies, where they prey upon new arrivals, European travellers and others, imposing upon them with borrowed certificates and clothing, and assumed names. The new comer will do well, then, in engaging servants to do so through the head servants of some friend or old resident, who will vouch for those they present for service. The amount of petty thieving that prevails, varied by a "grand coup" now and then, ought to be a caution to employers; but it is not so, and thus convicts and jail-birds appear to experience no difficulty in entering the service of certain classes of Europeans.

I once recognised a notorious criminal blandly waiting at the table of a gentleman with whom I was dining, and who, being informed of the true character of his servant, confessed to having engaged him without inquiry or inspection of certificates of character. This man, who eyed me furtively from time to time, to discover whether he was identified, was not only a thief, but had narrowly escaped conviction for a murder of a more than ordinarily dastardly and treacherous nature, and

of which he was undoubtedly guilty either as principal or as accomplice, evading justice only through the extreme tenderness of our laws towards the accused, and the slow, clumsy procedure of the Courts, which, with their elaborate forms and machinery, afford every facility for escape to the criminal, reminding one of a poacher who sets the most ingenious and complicated snares, but leaves in them many issues for the escape of the game he hopes to catch. In the case in point, the convict servant was immediately discharged; but there is little doubt that he obtained employment again under an assumed name, in some other district, with some equally careless employer.

The new-comer will have read and heard much of the profuse hospitality of Anglo-Indian houses. True enough formerly; but he must moderate his expectations in this respect, and need not apprehend a superfluity of pressing invitations "to come and stay as long as you can" on his arrival in Calcutta. He will, in due course, find this virtue still surviving in the "Mofussil," that is, in the interior of the country, and flourishing vigorously among the indigo plants, and around the indigo vats. There are many potent causes for the change which has taken place of late years, with which he will become fully acquainted after a residence of a year or two in Bengal. He must also modify considerably the commonly accepted estimate of the facilities for travelling based on liberal loans of boats, elephants, horses, and conveyances on the part of the residents of the interior, for he will have to depend mainly on his own resources, except in Northern Behar, where he will still receive much kind assistance in this respect. European civil officials are "few and far between," and even among those few, some eschew the indulgence of more than one or two horses or ponies, some even preferring to plod on foot to their Courts, sheltering their dignity under the humble gingham; while the many native officials rarely venture on the extravagance and perils of riding horses. I found myself once in a small civil station in Eastern Bengal where there were two horses in all, and not a single gun or

rifle ; the former rarely saddled or harnessed, and the use of the latter hardly known, although there were to be had in the district both hunting and shooting to a fair extent.

As a plain matter of fact, Bengal is not a country abounding in a wealthy, sporting, and rollicking community of officials and planters, whose only faults are inordinate generosity and hospitality ; on the contrary, it is in the main a very dull one, sparsely inhabited by a hard-working and plodding race of European men, whose aim is to get through the day's work before sunset, in order to play a few games of tennis or billiards before dinner and bed. There is much good fellowship and much kindly intercourse, but those historical bursts of joviality, and social and sporting high-jinks, are as rare as the famed gold-pagoda trees, which however still survive and bear fruit under the grateful shade of the courts of law, and in the fertile fields of trade.

A small medicine-chest, containing scissors, lancet, and needles, in addition to drugs, is a necessary part of every sportsman's outfit, besides a small store of carbolic acid, alum, and arsenical soap for curing skins. The medicines need not be more than quinine, cholera mixture, chlorodyne, laudanum, Cockle's pills, spirits of ammonia, nitre, lunar caustic, turpentine, and one or two others. When out hunting, horse medicines should not be forgotten.

If wounds received from the teeth or claws of tigers or panthers have to be dressed, they should be opened out to their very bottom, so that the carbolic acid or other medicine applied may thoroughly search them and leave no part untouched. Without cutting down freely, the base of the wounds may not be reached. Remember that such wounds are curved, and if the smallest atom of the putrid matter, which usually clings to the teeth and claws of the carnivora, remain in the wound, the most serious results ensue, whereas the lancet or knife will do no harm that cannot be easily met and overcome. Anyone who has had much experience will recall many instances of punctures and lacerations, which appeared of no serious nature at first, ending in death within

a few days, attributed commonly to a shock to the nervous system, but due more probably to blood-poisoning caused by a particle of putrid matter not reached by the remedies applied.

In camping out for any length of time tents should not be allowed to remain standing many days on the same spot; and it is an open question whether it be better to pitch them in a "tope" or grove of trees for the advantages of shade, or in the open. The air in groves is warmer and more unwholesome at night than on the plain. If, therefore, the shade of two or three trees can be obtained, it is preferable to that of many standing close together; and the tent should be pitched on the east or west of them for the sake of shade in the morning or afternoon, the south being left clear and open for the breeze, which blows from that quarter during seven or eight months of the year in Bengal.

When travelling in boats care should be taken to moor as far off the bank as is possible; or, better still, is an anchorage in the stream. Whether travelling by land or in boats, the purity of the drinking water is a matter of the utmost importance; for I feel assured that more danger to the health is to be apprehended from bad water than from bad air. Having procured the best to be got, boil and filter it, and then drink as little of it as you can, except as tea or coffee. A bottle of beer can do no one harm at dinner, and soda-water is easily obtainable in any quantity with a little forethought and arrangement.

The proverb that "a stitch in time saves nine" is never truer than in the preservation of health, and it deserves to be kept in the memory of those who must encounter some evil influences in malarious air and impure water, in addition to exposure to great heat, and sometimes to over-fatigue. Due precautions, and fasting for a day or two, even to the verge of semi-starvation, may do much without medicines; but there are times when they cannot be dispensed with altogether, and then the above proverb fits in most aptly.

If you desire to get your hand and eye in for quick and

accurate ball-shooting, practise on flying foxes and kites on the wing. Avoid target-practice, as well as much firing at fixed objects at which aim may be taken for an indefinite time before the trigger is pulled. Such practice may be very good for Volunteers, and even for soldiers; but it is, I think, positively detrimental to the sportsman, as inducing a stiff, slow, and mechanical habit.

Tigers, panthers, and deer often have to be fired at from the howdah, when unseen and moving rapidly through high grass or reeds ahead of the elephants, and there is a difficulty in naming rules to be observed as to the line of fire, which, perhaps, experience alone will teach; as it will also whether the motion of the grass is caused by one or another animal. The height of the rider's elephant, that of the covert, and the celerity and character of the movement must all be taken into account. The great carnivora in moving off communicate a slow waving motion to the grass or reeds; pigs and deer a more direct and rapid one, and these last usually make short rushes. Sambar and marsh-deer spring up with much commotion, and then dart forward at considerable speed; the last-named animal, however, is in the habit of pulling up after going eighty or a hundred yards, to take a backward look at its disturbers, thus presenting a standing shot. The rush of a large herd of buffaloes through tall, stout reeds is something worth seeing and hearing. Rhinoceros, being rarely roused in any numbers together, and moving heavily in a zig-zag course, may be readily distinguished from the last, although altogether unseen from the back of the elephant.

Guns and rifles, if discharged during the day, should be cleaned before night, or at least before the camp settles to rest, so as to be ready at any time next morning, as there is no saying when they may be needed, since hot "khubber" or news of game may arrive with daylight. The points and edges of spear-heads will often need to be touched up with a fine file to be fit for duty after a hard day's hog-hunting.

The rule in camp life is "early to bed and early to rise," and late sittings are the exception. In the cold season sport

is commonly followed from nine or ten in the morning till evening; and much the same hours are observed at other times when intelligence of a fresh kill, or of a tiger tracked and marked down, is waited for before the howdahs are mounted; but in excessively hot weather it is preferable to sally out as soon after dawn as is possible, and to return to camp by two in the afternoon at the latest, allowing eight hours for sport and five of daylight for the elephants to bring in fodder, to be bathed and washed, and for the attendants to cook and eat a midday meal. When sport has been very good I have risen before dawn, and, after some light refreshment, have been out till near sunset for several days in succession; but this cannot be persevered in for long without knocking up the elephants and servants. The hottest, as well as the worst time, for sport is that between an hour or two after noon and near sunset in the hot season, when wild beasts retire to their most remote lairs, and the elephants and their drivers become weary and depressed with the heat. The "mahouts" have this advantage over their charges in so much as they ride while the elephants walk; but, on the other hand, the latter feed heartily upon the tops of the grasses and reeds beaten up, whereas the former maintain a strict fast till return to camp, with the exception of an occasional pull at the cocoa-nut "hookah" passed round during a halt, or a chew of the "pān" leaf.

Small parties are generally to be preferred to large ones, at which fun and frolic are more remarkable than good sport. Nothing can be more delightful than a camp of four keen sportsmen bent on a hunting and shooting trip of two or three weeks, with all the necessary accompaniments of elephants, horses, and dogs, and prepared for every kind of sport, on foot, in the howdah, or in the saddle. ,

Sometimes great parties are formed by native grandees and others, often with the object of showing attention to men in authority and their friends or guests who may be on the trot round the world; and these take the field with much pomp and circumstance, with as many as a dozen or fifteen

howdahs and four or five score of elephants. The party being composed of men who go out but once or twice in the year, and of others to whom everything is new, and every bird or beast worth a shot, the firing, as may be supposed, is hot and continuous almost from the point of departure till return to camp; the globe-trotter gathering up the spoil, whether a pig, a python, a hind, a fawn, a buffalo, or a mongoose, with equal gratification, his great object being a heavy bag to be contrasted with other similarly made heavy bags. No true sportsman can take pleasure in such indiscriminate battues, or consent to share in them; and the less one hears of such slaughter regardless of age, sex, or season, the better.

Those who can afford to take the field "en prince" have duplicate sets of tents, furniture, and servants, so that whether they shoot or only ride the stage, a complete camp awaits them at its termination; but in these days of the depreciated rupee few can indulge in such a luxury, and those few are the highest officials, whose travelling expenses are paid by the State.

The tents in common use are the "single-poled," the "hill-tent," the "Swiss-cottage," and the "routee" with double fly. The warmest in winter and the coolest in summer is the first, but it is heavy and requires carriage in proportion. The "cottage-tent" $14' \times 14'$ or $16' \times 16'$ is the prettiest and the most airy, and is almost as heavy; a smaller size $12' \times 12'$ is cosy, light, and quickly pitched, but in these respects the "routee," with double-fly and 5 ft. "kanāts" or walls, is superior still, as it can be pitched in the shade of a single large Mangoe or tamarind tree. Besides the above, smaller tents called "pals," serve as bath-rooms, kitchens, and shelter for servants and followers. A complete camp therefore for four or five sportsmen, their attendants, horses, hounds, and elephants, numbering about a hundred bipeds and half a hundred quadrupeds, is not to be moved without a considerable amount of carriage, all of which must be taken from the place of departure, or hired on the spot when the camp is moved.

Transport by boats when practicable is cheaper but slower than that by carts, for while the latter may have to go only ten or twelve miles by land, the boats may have to cover double that distance in consequence of the windings of the river.

Unless furniture suitable for camp use be provided there will be great breakage; every article should therefore be strong, and should fold up in a small compass compactly. Among other things, a long, reclining cane chair, large and small hand "punkahs" of the leaf of the "tal" palm, and a fine mat ("sital-patee"), to be laid upon the bed should never be forgotten, being indispensable in warm weather.

The art of tracking is not a strong point in Bengalee "Shikarees," and there are no Kamabs or Chingachgooks among them. Sometimes a really able tracker may turn up among Santhals, and professional tiger and panther hunters, but few such will be found in the ranks of the ordinary "Shikarees" of the country. As a rule Europeans neglect to acquire this most necessary accomplishment in sportsmen, preferring to put themselves in the hands of natives who pretend to a knowledge of the art, which is both useful and interesting, the writing of footprints and other signs being as legible and full of meaning to the adept as that of a book to the student.

Should your camp be pitched near a police station, authentic information of the whereabouts of the game of the neighbourhood may be gathered from the village watchmen, who come in to make their reports, and the offer of half the Government reward paid for the destruction of wild beasts of prey will act as a wholesome stimulant. From the police officers and constables at the station itself, very little will be elicited, as they are ignorant in an extraordinary degree of things not falling within the routine of duty; but useful hints may be extracted from the register, in which all deaths caused by wild animals are regularly recorded.

Unless you join the camp of some official you are not likely to meet natives of the higher orders, the majority of

whom keep aloof from Europeans in general and non-official Europeans in particular. Differing greatly from their countrymen who have been trained and educated in England, this class—the crude fruit of the local schools and colleges—is in the habit of complaining of the disinclination of Europeans to mix with them in social intercourse, the fault lying in truth with them who conceding nothing themselves, expect from others every kind of concession to their own social and religious prejudices and superstitions.

In travelling and hunting you will necessarily come much in contact with the lower orders of the country people—traders, agriculturists, mechanics, and others—by whom your temper will sometimes be tried almost beyond endurance, but for all that, you will find your account in treating them with patience and forbearance, while resisting firmly all attempts at knavery and extortion. Having nothing in common with Europeans, except the air both breathe alike, these people's ideas, habits, thoughts, inferences, and estimates of good and evil differ altogether from our own; add to this their strong disposition to attribute in all cases evil rather than good motives and intentions, and their proneness to swallow greedily every malicious or outrageous report, and you have a race by no means estimable; but, on the other hand, you will find them intelligent, observant, docile, and easily pleased and gratified.

In making purchases, it is desirable to deal directly with the sellers, and not through the police, whose tariff is higher than that of the bazaars when not buying on their own account; but if they at any time render ready and efficient assistance, give them a liberal present, for they are hard-worked and under-paid, the Government—a very moral one, especially in reports, resolutions, and reprimands—conniving indirectly at their little peccadillos while saving some money, but rising to a high pitch of moral wrath when those same little peccadillos become too palpable. “My friends,” cried the admirable Mr. Pecksniff, “let us be moral. Let us contemplate existence!” “My

friends," exclaims the Indian Government, "let us be moral above all things. Let us contemplate our chronic financial pressure." An awful phrase is that terrible "financial pressure," the ready excuse for doing many things which ought not to be done, and leaving undone many things which ought to be done. Considering the length of time that this chronic disease has seized upon its vitals, the question naturally arises, How has the Government survived, and how, under its torments, is it able, at short intervals, to break out into the most extravagant frolics and diversions?

There is little thieving now in camp in Bengal and Orissa, but in Behar it is necessary to be on guard, more especially on the Trunk Road between Govindpoor and Shergotty. Prior to 1863, this great highway to the North-Western Provinces was strongly protected by police outposts and stations, the former at intervals of three and the latter of twelve miles, with patrols, horse and foot, passing constantly between them night and day; but subsequent to the establishment of the present force, the outposts have gradually been reduced under successive "financial pressures," till at length they have all disappeared, and some weakly-manned stations and the thieves alone remain. The extension of the East Indian Railway having caused a material diminution of the traffic on that road, a reduction of the police upon it is justifiable, but hardly to the extent it has been carried out. Be that as it may, the traveller and the sportsman camping along it, as well as in some other parts of Behar, will do well in keeping up some sort of a night-watch, for which duty he will find his dogs far more efficient than his servants or the village police. Not long ago three attempts were made upon my camp, pitched alongside of a police station, during the same night; but, thanks to my dogs, only one was successful, and that upon the person of a policeman, who ought to have been on the watch, but who slept so soundly that his purse, containing some silver and copper coins, was taken from his waistcloth! A friend, whose custom was to "turn in" almost fully dressed

when in camp, in order to wage unceasing war against jackals hyenas, and panthers, had his gun stolen from his side notwithstanding his vigilance and frequent sallies out of his tent.

If a robbery be committed in camp or boat, no matter where, it should be reported to the police if any station or outpost be within convenient distance, although in nine out of ten cases nothing will come of it; but if, in the tenth, a man be arrested and sent up before some magistrate—possibly thirty, forty, or fifty miles off—a tedious and oft-adjourned inquiry will inevitably follow. It will be prudent, therefore, after reporting the theft and handing in an accurate list of the stolen articles to vacate that “section” of country, as the United Statesians say, to avoid a waste of time and further losses. In short, to protect his camp, the traveller must rely upon himself and his dogs; and he will, to that end, find it desirable to keep at hand a gun, to use small shot, and to fire low.

In shooting with a line of elephants if not mounted on your own, it will be advisable to let your “Mahout” understand clearly that good and plucky conduct on his part will be followed by a liberal present at the close of the trip, and laziness and cowardice in a serious diminution thereof. “Mahouts” as a class are indolent and aggravating to a degree, particularly those in the service of the ordinary run of “Zameendars” or native land-proprietors, whom they are accustomed to cajole and domineer over; and often, when first brought into line, they are apt to try on the same game, till sharply taken to task. If the captain of the beat know his duty and be properly supported by the European sportsmen shooting under his guidance, such men may be brought under discipline in a couple of days. To lose temper, to use violent language, or to exert manual suasion on one’s “Mahout,” is to make bad worse; for if stupid and apathetic, he will not become brighter and smarter by having his hair brushed with the butt-end of a heavy rifle, and if sulky and vicious he will grow worse under that process. The “Mahouts” of such noblemen as the Nawabs of Moorshedabad and Dacca

are, on the contrary, as steady and well-conducted as the elephants they guide. Perhaps the finest stud of sporting elephants at the present time is that of the Maharajah of Kuch-Behar.

I was once out with twelve elephants belonging to gentlemen connected with indigo planting in Purneah, which for their number were the very best I have ever met with, ten at least of the dozen being steady beasts fit to carry the howdah ; and I may add, that the three or four men who rode them were, taking them all round, as keen and persevering sportsmen, and as good and ready marksmen as any I have ever known, men brought up in a school falling out of fashion and giving place to others known among Hindostanees as "sabebau-i-Kullum," Anglicè and vulgarly, quill-drivers.

I have always been in the habit of filling up cartridges with my own hands, neither entrusting that duty to any servant, nor buying filled ones ready made. Using as I do the blue cases for snipe and other bird-shooting, I have found that they may be re-filled at least twice, if the exploded caps be immediately punched out and the cases themselves be dried and cleaned with a brush ; new caps should not be inserted till the time has come for re-loading. For ball, I use the green case, but never a second time for the same purpose.

I have after some experience found No. 4 powder the best for shot cases, and No. 6 for rifles. As a rule, I dislike shells for rifles, but am partial to Mead's for smooth-bores, for use on soft animals, such as tigers, panthers, and bears, if used for ranges not exceeding sixty or seventy yards, and if carefully loaded with freshly mixed exploding mixture.





CHAPTER XX.

Lists of Game Animals and Birds of the Lower Provinces of Bengal, in English and Hindostanee—A Vocabulary of English and Hindostanee Words in Common Use in Camp and Travelling.

A LIST OF GAME ANIMALS OF THE LOWER PROVINCES OF BENGAL.

N.B.—Those marked with an asterisk are hardly considered game, and are rarely fired at by Indian sportsmen in pursuit of big game.

ENGLISH NAMES.				HINDOSTANEE NAMES.			
Antelope, Indian	kalaharan, mirg ; boutea (Bengal).		
„ four-horned	chousingha.		
„ nilghau	nil-ghau.		
Bear, sloth	bhaloo, reench.		
„ Himalayan black	do.	do.	
„ Malayan	do.	do.	
Buffalo	bhainsa, arna.		
Deer, sambur	sambhur.		
„ marsh	bāra-singha ; ghous (in some parts) ; beringee.		
„ spotted	cheetal.		
„ hog	pāra.		
„ barking	kākar.		
„ mouse	?		
*Dog, wild	kohiya, dhole, ban-kookar.		
Elephant	hāthee.		
*Fox	loomree.		
Gour	gour.		
Gayal	gayal, mithan.		
Gazelle	chikara.		
Gooral	gooral.		

ENGLISH NAMES.				HINDOSTANEE NAMES.
Hare	...	...	...	khargosh, kharaha, leparoo, and poo-tiya in Eastern Bengal.
„ hispid	...	...	...	?
Hog, wild	...	...	...	sooar, bāra.
„ pigmy	...	...	...	?
*Hyena	...	...	...	lakra-bagha.
*Jackal	...	...	...	geedhur, siyāl.
Leopard, hunting	...	...	...	cheeta bagh.
*Lynx	...	...	...	seea-gosh.
*Otter	...	...	...	ood, ood-bilā'o.
Panther, grass	...	...	...	kendoo'a, tendoo'a, sona-cheeta (Bengal).
„ tree	...	...	...	kendoo'a.
„ clouded	...	...	...	?
„ black	...	...	...	kāla bagh.
*Porcupine	...	...	...	sahee, sērja (Bengal).
*Ratel	...	...	...	bujjēr-bhāl.
Rhinoceros, Indian	...	...	...	} gainda.
„ Soonderbun	...	...	...
„ Malayan	...	...	...
Tiger	...	...	...	bāgh, sher.
*Wolf	...	...	...	booraha, bheriya.

A LIST OF GAME BIRDS OF THE LOWER PROVINCES OF BENGAL.

N.B.—Those marked with an asterisk are rarely fired at by old Indian sportsmen.

ENGLISH NAMES.				HINDOSTANEE NAMES.
Avocet	...	...	...	kusya chaba (Jerdon).
*Bittern, black	...	...	...	} baz (ditto).
* „ chestnut	...	...	...
* „ blue	...	...	...
* „ yellow	...	...	...
*Coot, bald	...	...	...	dasari, moorghāb.
„ purple	...	...	...	kālim, kaim.
Crane, koolong	...	...	...	koolang.
* „ large white	...	...	...	safēd kārkāra.
* „ sarus	...	...	...	sārus.

ENGLISH NAMES.				HINDOSTANEE NAMES.
Curlew	...	...	...	chappa.
*Dove, bronze-winged	...	...	...	raj-googoo.
* „ spotted	...	...	...	cheeta-googoo.
* „ ring...	...	...	...	googoo.
* „ red	...	...	...	golabee googoo.
* „ rufous	...	...	...	„ „
Duck, mallard	...	...	...	neel-sir hāns.
„ pink-headed	..	..	...	lāl-sir hāns.
„ spotted-bill	...	..	...	garm-pai (Jerdon).
„ pintail	...	...	...	dig-hans.
„ white-eyed	...	...	...	lāl-higri.
*Egret	...	...	...	boghla.
Flamingo	...	...	...	bogh-hāns.
Floriken	...	...	...	churrus.
„ lesser	...	...	...	likh, chota-churrus.
Gadwal	...	...	...	?
Godwit	...	...	...	gairiya.
„ snipe-billed	...	...	...	„
Goose, bar-headed	...	...	...	kāj.
„ black-backed	...	...	...	nakta.
„ gray...	...	...	...	kaj, hāns.
Goose-teal	...	...	...	higri.
*Grebe, little	...	...	...	pan-doochi.
Heron, blue...	...	...	...	kahad.
„ giant	...	...	...	bāra-kāk.
„ night	...	...	...	wāk.
„ pond	...	...	...	kani-bagla.
„ purple	...	...	...	nari.
*Ibis, shell	...	...	...	gougol.
„ black...	...	...	...	kurakal.
„ white...	...	...	...	kuchi-chora.
„ pelican	...	...	...	jhānghil.
*Jabiru	...	...	...	loharjang, ramsālik.
*Jacana, bronze	...	...	...	dūlpipee, jūlpipee.
* „ pheasant...	...	...	...	do. pee'as.
*Lapwing, crested...	...	...	...	titi, tittiri.
* „ red-wattled	...	...	...	„
* „ spur-winged	...	...	...	„
Ortolan	...	...	...	bagairee.
Partridge, black	...	...	...	kalateetur.
„ gray	...	...	...	teetur.
„ kya	..	...	..	kya.

ENGLISH NAMES.				HINDOSTANEE NAMES.
Peacock	...	...	...	mohar.
*Pelican, crested	...	...	...	} gōgāuhēr.
* " gray	...	...	...
* " lesser gray	...	...	...
* " lesser white	...	...	...
Pheasant, kaliḡ	...	...	...	kālīḡ.
" Sikkim	...	...	...	"
" polyplectron	...	...	...	?
Pigeon, ashy-headed	...	...	...	hariāl.
" Bengal green	...	...	...	hariāl.
" lesser do.	...	...	...	chota hariāl.
" blue-rock	...	...	...	jalālia.
" green imperial	...	...	...	bārahariāl, dunkal.
" kokla	...	...	...	kokla.
" orange-breasted	...	...	...	chota hariāl.
Plover, golden	...	...	...	} ?
" gray	...	...	...
" small	...	...	...
" sand	...	...	...
" stone	...	...	...	kar wanak (Jerdon).
Pochard, red-crested	...	...	...	des-hāns.
" red-headed	...	...	...	lāl-sir.
Quail, bush	...	...	...	bāttēr.
" bustard	...	...	...	"
" black-breasted	...	...	...	"
" blue-breasted orrain	...	...	...	"
" button	...	...	...	"
" large gray	...	...	...	"
Rail	...	...	...	donk.
" water	...	...	...	"
Redshank	...	...	...	?
Sandgrouse, lesser	...	...	...	burbar-teetur.
*Sandlark	...	...	...	chegga.
*Sandpiper	...	...	...	"
Sheldrake, ruddy	...	...	...	chakwa, bādi-hāns (of Eastern Bengal).
Shoveller	...	...	...	tidari (Jerdon).
Snipe, common	...	...	...	chāhar.
" jack	...	...	...	"
" painted	...	...	...	"
" pintailed	...	...	...	"
" wood	...	...	...	"

ENGLISH NAMES.				HINDOSTANEE NAMES.
Spoonbill	...	...	...	chamach haz.
Spurfowl, red	...	...	...	?
Stitt	...	...	...	...
*Stork, black-necked	...	...	...	loharjung, ramsālik.
* „ gigantic	...	...	...	hārgila.
* „ white-necked	...	...	...	manikjor.
* „ hair-crested	...	...	...	chandana.
Teal, common	...	...	...	bigri.
„ blue-winged...	...	...	...	„
„ clucking	...	...	...	„
„ whistling	...	...	...	sarail, silli.
„ do. lesser	...	...	...	chota sarail, chota silli.
Water-cock...	...	...	...	khora.
*Water-hen...	...	...	...	jālmoorghēe.
Whimbrel	...	...	...	chota chappa.
Widgeon	...	...	...	?
Woodcock	...	...	...	sim-teetur (Jerdon).
Wood-pigeon, Darjeeling...	...	...	...	jangalee kabootar.
„ purple	...	...	...	„

A VOCABULARY OF SOME HINDOSTANEE WORDS

USEFUL TO THE SPORTSMAN IN CAMP AND IN THE FIELD.

N.B.—Apart from the niceties of many Persian letters, which for practical purposes need not be closely observed here, the Urdu words may be pronounced as written, the following rules being kept in mind :—

ă	to be pronounced as	u	in hut.
ā	„	„	a in path.
ē	„	„	a in hate.
ĩ	„	„	i in hit.
o	„	„	o in post.
oo	„	„	oo in goose.

The words in commonest use are given first. Bengalee words are rarely used in sport, and are not necessary to the ordinary traveller or sportsman.

Accoutrement, sâz, saranjâm.
Afternoon, bād-do-pahar, bekal.
Age, oomar, sinu.
Aim, shast, nishân.
Air, hāwa.
Alarm, to, darāna, bharkāna.
Alike, barābar, eksān, samān.
All, sâb, tamām, bil-kool.
Anchor, lungār.
Anger, khafgee, ghoosa.
Animal, jānwar, baiwān.
Answer, jawāb.
Antelope, kāla haran, mirg.
Antler, jhānk, seeng.
Ape, bāndār.
Apparel, kapra, libās, poshāk.
Archer, teer-andāz.
Arm, hāth, bānh.
Arms, hathiyār.
Arrangement, band-o-bast, intizām.
Arrow, teer.
Ashes, rākh, chā'ee.
Ashore, kinārē, kinārē-par.

Ass, gadha, khār.
Axe, koolhāree, tangee.
Back, peeth.
Bad, kharāb, boora, bād.
Bag, jhola, thailee.
Baggage, asbāb, chees, bust, saranjām.
Ball, golee.
 „ *large*, gola.
Bamboo, bāns.
Bandage, puttee, bāndbān.
Bank (of a river), kinara.
Bannock, chapātee.
Barber, hajjām, nāpit.
Barge, bujra, kishtee, nā o.
Barrel (of a gun), nal, nālee.
Basket, tokree, pitāra.
Basin (washing), chillumchee.
Bath, ghoosal, hamām.
Bathe, to, ghoosal-karna, nahāna.
Beak (of a bird), chonch, nok.
Bear, bhāl, bhāloo, reench.
Beast, haiwān.
Bed, pālāng, chārpai.

Bedding, bichouna, bistara.
Bellow, to, dabākna, ghoor-
 ghoorāna.
Belly, pēt.
Belt, pētee, partāla.
Big, bāra, mota.
Bird, chiriya, pākhee.
Biteh, kootee, kootiya.
Bite, to, kātna.
Black, kāla, siya.
Blanket, kāmāl, kamlee, loo'ee.
Blind (not seeing), āndha.
Blood, lohoo, khoon.
Blue, nila, leela.
Boar, soo'ar, bāra.
Boatman, māllah, dāndee.
Body, buddan.
Bog, pānk, dāl-dāl.
Bone, haddee, hār.
Book, kitāb.
Bough, dālee, dāla.
Bow, kamān, kamtha.
Bread, rote.
Bridge, pool, sūkho.
Bridle, laggām, bāg
Brook, nāla.
Bucket, bāltee.
Buffalo, bhainsa.
 „ *wild*, arna.
Bullet, golee.
Camel, oont, shootar.
 „ *-driver*, sarbān, sar-wān.
Canal, nārḥ.
Cane (*wild*), bēnt.
Canoe, doonga, dēngee.
Cap (*or hat*), topee.
Carcass, lāsh.
Cards, tās.
Cardamom (*wild*), tāra.
Cart, garee, saggar.
Carter, ghāreewān.
Cartridge, tonta.
Cat, bilā'o (*male*), billee (*female*).
 „ *civet*, kattās.

Cat (*wild*), bān-bitā'o.
Chair, chaukee, koorsee.
Chase, shikār.
Chest (*or box*), sandook, pētee.
Claw, nākhoon, panja.
Claw, to, nochna.
Cloud, ābār, badlee, bādāl.
Cold, thanda, sard.
Colour, rāg, bārān.
Corn, anaj, ghalla.
Corn-field, khēt.
Cotton, roo'ee, kapās.
Cotton tree, simal.
Counterpane, rezai'ee.
Country, moolk, dēs.
Cow, gai'ee.
Cow-herd, go'ala.
Crab, kenkra.
Cracker, patākha.
Crocodile, māggār, koomheer.
 „ *gangetic*, ghāriāl.
Cup, piyāla, katora.
Custom, dastoor, zabita.
Dagger, khanjar, katār.
Damage, nooksān, hārāj.
Danger, khatra.
Dark, andhēra.
Dawn, tarkē, bhor.
Day, din, roz.
Dear (*not cheap*), māngḥa.
Deeoy, dhoka, forēb.
Deep, gairha.
Deer, haran.
Demon, rakhas, deo, bhoot.
Devil, shaitan.
Die, to, mārna.
Distance, pālla, arsa.
Ditch, khandak, khai'ee.
Dog, kootta, kookar.
 „ *wild*, kobiya, dhole, bān-
 kookar.
Door, darwāza.
Double, dohra.
 „ *-edged*, do-dābra.

Drink, to, peena, ghootna.
Drum, dhol, dholak, tubla.
Duck, bātlāk.
Ear, kān.
Eat, to, khāna, bhojan-karna.
Ebb, bhāta.
Edge (of a blade), dbār.
Egg, ānda.
Elephant, hāthee, feel, gaj.
 „ *female*, hathnee.
 „ *with tusks*, dantēla.
 „ *without tusks*, mōkna.
 „ *with one*, ganēsha.
 „ *pad*, gaddee.
Empty, khālee.
Encamp, to, dēra-dālana.
Enemy, dooshman, ghalīm.
Enough, bās, bahoot, kāfee.
Entrails, antriyān.
Equal, barābar, eksān.
Error, ghaltee.
Escape, to, bhāgna, bachna.
Evening, shām.
Exclamation, shor, ghool, shorshār.
Eye, ānkh.
Face, moonh, mookh, chihra.
Fan, punkah.
Far, door, tafāwat.
Farrier, nālband.
Fat, mota, tāza, chikna.
Fault, kasoor, takseer.
Fear, dār, kha'of.
Feather, pār.
Feed, to, khilāna.
Female, mādee.
Ferry, goožāra.
Fight, lara'ee, jodh.
Finger, anglee.
Fire, āg.
Fire-works, atash-bazee.
Fish, machee, machlee.
Flag, nishān, jhanda.
Flags (rushes), hoogla.
Flesh, ghost.

Flower, phool.
Foot, pa'on, ghor.
Forest, bān, jangal.
Fowl, moorghee, moorgh.
Fox, loomree.
Fruit, phal, mēwa.
Frog, bēng, mendook.
Fur, pāshm, bāl.
Goat, bakra, bakree (*female*).
Good, acha, khoob, bhāla.
Goose, raj-hāns, kāz (*wild*).
Grain, ghalla, dāna, anāj.
Grass, ghās, khār.
Great, bāra.
Groom, sa'eas.
Grove, bāgh, gāchee.
Grunt, to, ghoorgoorāna.
Gun, bandook.
 „ *powder*, baroot.
 „ *stock*, koonda.
 „ *barrel*, nāl, nālee.
 „ *wad*, tiklee.
Hair, bāl, choal.
Half, ādha.
Hund, hāth, ponja.
Hard, sākt, kāra.
Hare, khar-gosb, kharaha, lambha,
 sosa.
Harness, sāj.
Hat, topee.
Hatchet, koolhāree.
Heart, dil.
Hearth, chouka.
Herd, pāl.
High, ooncha.
Hill, pahār, parbat.
Hillock, teela, toongree.
Hog, soo'ar, bāra, soakār.
Horn, seeng.
 „ *Rhinoceros*, khāg.
Horse, ghora.
Hot, ghārm.
Hour, ghanta, dānd.
House, ghār, makān, hawēlee.
Hungry, bhookha.

Hunt, to, shikar-karna, ragēdna.
Hunter, shikāree, baheliya.
Hut, jhoopree, chappar.
Hyena, lākār-bagha, lakra.
Information, khabbār.
Ink, see'ae.
Iron, loha.
Jackal, geedar, siyāl-srigāl.
Javelin, barchee.
Journey, sufr, sair.
Kill, to, mār-dāl̄na.
Kingfisher, mochranga.
Kitchen, bawārchee-khāna.
Kite (bird), cheel.
Knife, chooree, chākkoo.
 „ *pen*, kullam-tarāsh.
Lake, jheel, tāl, talāo.
Lame, langra.
Lance, bārchee.
Land, zameen, bhoom.
 „ *holder*, zameen-dār.
Landing-place, ghāt.
Lantern, fanoos.
Large, bāra, mota.
Lead, seesa.
Leaf, pāt̄ta, pāt̄.
Leap, to, kodna, tapna.
Leather, chamra, chām.
Left (not right), ba'yan.
Leopard, cheetā-bāgh.
Light, oojāla, roshnee.
Lightning, bij'lee, bār̄k.
Lion, sher, singh.
Live, to, jeena.
Liver, kalēja, jigar.
Lizard, girgit, tik-tikee.
 „ *monitor*, goo-samp.
Loud (burden), bhoja.
Long, lām̄ba.
Look, to, dekhna, nāzār-karna.
Make, to, bauāna.
Male, nār.
Man, mār̄d, ādmee, nāfār.
Man-eater, ādmee-khor.

March, to, kooch-karna, chāl̄na.
Mare, ghoree, mād̄wān.
Mark, nishān.
Market, bazār, hāt, cho'uk.
Mat, chata'ee.
Measure, to, mapna, napna.
Midnight, ādhee-rāt̄.
Milk, doodh.
Mire, chahla, keechar.
Money, roopai'a, nākd̄a.
Mongoose, hejee, newāl̄.
Monkey, bāndār.
Moon, chānd, mahtāb.
Morning, fāj̄r, bhor, bihān.
Mount, to, chār̄na, oothna.
Mouse, choohee, moosee.
Mouth, moonh.
Mud, chahla, keechār, dāldāl̄.
Mule, kāchār.
Name, nām̄.
Near, pās, nāzdik, kareeb.
Neck, gār̄dan, gālla.
Net, jāl̄.
New, naya, na'o.
News, khābbār.
Night, rāt̄.
Noise, awāz, shor, ghool.
Noon, do-pāhār.
Noose, phānsee, phoondū.
North, oothār.
Nose, nāk̄.
Often, āksār̄.
Oil, tēl̄.
Old, poorana, bhoorha.
Order, hookm, formā'ish.
Ortolan, bagēree.
Otter, ood.
Owl, ooloo, pēncha.
Ox, ba'il, goroo.
Pad, gād̄dee.
Panther, kendoo'a, tendoo'a.
Paper, kāghaz.
Partridge, teetār̄.
Pathway, pāg-dāndee.

Pelican, gāgānbēr.
Pen, källām.
Pick-axe, kodālee.
Pigeon, kabbotar.
Pole-axe, ganūsa.
Pond, tala'o, talāb, dighee.
Porpoise, soos.
Porcupine, sāhee, sēza.
Quail, bātēr.
Quickly, jaldee, toorant, fuoran.
Quilt, raza'ee.
Rain, jhāree, bārish.
 to, barasna, panee-parna.
Rainbow, dhanak.
Rainy season, barsāt.
Rat, chooha, moosa.
Raw, kācha.
Red, lāl, soorkh.
Reeds, nāl, nārkat.
Rein, rās, bāgh.
Resin, dhoona.
Rhinoceros, guenda.
 -horn, khāg.
Rice (plant, or in husk), dhān.
 (husked), cha'ol.
 (cooked), bhāt.
Ride, to, sawār-hona, charna.
River, naddee, dariya.
Rivulet, nāla.
Road, rāstah, sārāk, rah.
Rocket (sky-), hawa'ee.
Roof, chappar, chat, chāl.
Rope, rasee, doree.
Round, gol.
Rower, dundee, mallah.
Run, to, da'orna.
Rust, zaog, morcha.
Sack, bora.
Saddle, zeen.
Sail, pāl.
Salt, nāmāk, noon.
Saltpetre, shora.
Sand, baloo.
Say, to, bolna, kahna.

Scabbard, miyān.
Scent, bo, gandle.
 to, soongna.
Scissors, kēnchee.
Scorpion, bichoo, bichee.
Sea, samoondar, sāgar.
Season, mousim, oiyām.
Second, doosra.
See, to, dekhna, nāzār-karna.
Seek, to, khojna, talāsh-karna.
Seize, to, pakarna, pakar-lena.
Send, to, bējna.
Servant, na'okar, chākar.
Shadow, cha'on, cha'ya.
Shape, shākāl, soorat.
Sharp, tez.
Sheep, bheree.
Shield, dhāl.
Shoe, joota, jootee.
 horse-, nāl.
 to (a horse), nāl-bandhna.
 -maker, mochee.
Shop, doakān.
Shot, charra.
Shoulder, kāndha.
Shower, jhārree.
Signal, ishārat.
Silent, choop, choop-chāp.
Sit, to, baithna.
Skin, chāmra, chām.
Sky, asmān.
Sleep, neend, nindra.
 to, sona.
Slow, soost, dheela.
Smell, to, soongna, bo-lēna.
Smith (black-), lohār.
Smoke, dhoo'a.
Snaffle, dahna, kazai'ee.
Snake, sāmp, keera-nāg.
Soft, nārm, moola'im.
Sound, awāz.
South, dākhān.
Spear, bāllām, bārchee.
Sport, shikār.

Sportsman, shikāree.
Spring, to, tāpna, jhapatna.
 „ -*tide*, katal, katal.
Spy, jasoos, goinda.
Squirrel, gilōhree.
Stables, istābal.
Stag, jhānk.
Stall, thān.
Stand, to, khāra-rahna.
Stirrup, rikāb.
Stone, pāthār, sāng.
Storm, toofān, āndhee, jhapsa.
Strap, patta, tasma.
Straw, bichālee, naloo'a, po'ul.
Stream, dhāra, dhār.
String, doree, rāsee, sootlee.
Strong, mazboot.
Stubble, nāree, nāra, koontee.
Sulphur, gāndāk.
Sun, sooraj, aftāb.
 „ -*shine*, dhoop, ghām.
Surround, to, ghēr-lena.
Swamp, dāl-dāl, jheel.
Sword, kirich, talwār, shamshēr.
Table, mēz.
Tail, doom.
Tall, ooncha.
Tallow, chārbee.
Tamarisk, jhā'o.
Tape, pattee, newār.
Teach, to, sikhāna, sikhāna.
Temper, mizāj, tabeeyāt.
Tent, tāmbū, kheema, dēra.
 „ -*pole*, chob.
 „ -*peg*, mekh.
 „ -*pitcher*, kalāssee.
Thicket, jhār, jhoar, jängäl.

Thief, chor.
Thirst, piyās.
Thorn, kānta.
Threaten to, dhamkāna, dhamka-
 dēna.
Throat, gulla.
Throw to, phenkna, dālna.
Thunder, kārāk, garaj, ra'ad.
Tide, jo'ar.
Tiger, bāgh, sher.
Time, wākt.
Tin, rānga.
Tongue, jeeb, zabān.
Tooth, dānt.
Torch, mashāl.
Track, pāg, khoj.
 „ to, khoj-karna.
Tracking-rope, goon.
Trade, tajārat, soudāgaree.
Tradesman, baiparee, dookāndār.
Trap, kāl, jāutee.
Travel, to, sāfār-karna, phērna.
Traveller, moosafir, rāh-geer.
Tree, gāch, darakht, pēr.
Tremble, to, kāmpna, thartha-
 rāna.
Trouble, dookh, tasdeea, taklif.
Trunk of an elephant, soond, sout.
Tumble, to, girna, gir-pārna.
Turtle, kachoo'a.
Twine, soothlee.
Wad (gun), tiklee.
Water, pānee, jāl.
Wine, sharāb.
Wolf, booraba, bhēriya.
Wood, khāt, lākree.
Wound, zākhm.



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